

## TEAM Helps Bridge the Gap between Classroom and Applied Knowledge

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Today's high school students are faced with many choices regarding their education and career path. On a statewide scale, Santa Rosa County is a superior school district with a host of nationally recognized career academies and a top notch technical school that prepares students for exciting careers in a variety of lucrative fields. Some of those careers include vast opportunities in the construction industry. TEAM Santa Rosa helped bring GEO Group to Milton in March to construct the Blackwater River Correctional Institute. GEO's project manager, Greg Johnson, is a remarkable community advocate and has worked with TEAM and Locklin Tech on a number of workforce development initiatives.

Johnson recently visited Locklin Tech and spoke to more than 150 high school students in their construction academy. These students included those studying welding, electricity, building construction and HVAC. His message covered details on topics including project management in terms supply procurement, green building and safety requirements. All of which are matters that students interested in working in the construction industry would be dealing with daily.

Locklin Tech officials have shared that guests to the classroom like Greg Johnson provide invaluable validation of what the students learn in the classroom. "Business people like Greg Johnson help bring our training experience full circle," said Charlin Knight, Assistant Principal at Locklin Tech. The students are exposed to industry curriculum and the expertise of our instructors each day, but when a "real-world" boss or project manager comes in and reinforces the messages they heard from the teacher, it becomes a whole new ball game. With the business person onsite, they are able to ask questions directly and further explore their interest and aptitude for the field.

"We need more Greg Johnson's to help inspire our students and give them a real-world glimpse of what their chosen industries will entail as a career."

TEAM Santa Rosa places a significant focus on workforce development. When companies are looking to locate their business in a community, availability of skilled employees is a paramount consideration. Partnerships like the one TEAM has with Locklin, GEO and the School District of Santa Rosa County are key for economic development. They help TEAM Santa Rosa tout county assets to interested companies looking at Santa Rosa County as a new home.