

Industrials arts: A lost art

Pair of local businesses pitch futures to high school officials

By Tanner Kent

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MANKATO — Dave Clyne graduated from Mankato West High School on a Thursday in 1984.

He started his job as a welder the following Monday.

“I had three days off from school,” he joked.

For more than two decades, Clyne has learned several specialized metal working techniques and, these days, works at AmeriStar Manufacturing on a high-tech press brake specially designed to bend and punch holes in sheet metal.

Clyne’s is the kind of job that can only be learned on the job. A blend of mathematical and engineering acumen as well as experience and technical proficiency on his machine have made the West graduate a valuable tradesman.

Problem is, there are not enough like him to take his place.

As officials at both AmeriStar and nearby Jones Metal Products gave tours to counselors and principals from Mankato Area Public Schools, the message to educators was clear: “ We need to get kids interested somehow,” said Charlie Lyons, production manager at Jones Metal Products.

With the financial climate tightening school budgets, much of a school’s resources are devoted to meeting the required math, reading and science standards. Often, schools can afford only the elective classes that generate high levels of student interest.

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John Cross

From left to right: Randy Peterson, head welder at Jones Metal Products, Mankato East counselors Heather Krause and Linda Ring, Central High School Principal Steve Byrne and Martha Richards, CEO of Jones Metal toured a pair of Mankato-based metal fabricators Wednesday.