

Friday, Apr 23, 2010

Governor Beebe's weekly column and radio address: Real World Education

Any education is not complete without establishing a practical application in real-life situations for what that person learns. Our students can take classes in broad subjects like math, English, or science. But in order to grasp the importance of this information and these skills in their lives beyond school, students must have the chance to employ those skills in a real-world setting.

Earlier this month, I joined more than 2,100 students from across Arkansas in Hot Springs to apply their abilities in career and technical readiness at the 2010 Arkansas SkillsUSA State Leadership Championship. They showcased the skills they had amassed in culinary arts, construction and emergency response, among many others.

These ambitious, innovative students came from all over Arkansas, from different backgrounds and different schools. But they all had one thing in common. They were each planning for their careers by taking their futures into their own hands. The winners now go on to compete at the national level.

This pursuit continues at our higher-education institutions as well. This past week, we celebrated the 10th annual Donald W. Reynolds Governor's Cup. Undergraduate and graduate students competed to create comprehensive business plans, including soliciting start-up funds from potential investors. The winners received cash awards intended to transform those ideas into tangible realities, and they compete at the tri-state finals next month. Equipped with the tools, resources, and professional contacts that came out of that conference, our students' successes are only as limited as their imaginations. They are well on their way toward continuing a proud tradition of entrepreneurship in our State; I hope they'll choose to keep their talents in Arkansas.

Events like these are important for more people beyond the students involved. The business, industrial, and educational partners who work together with students and schools discover mutually beneficial opportunities and potential future leaders. They recognize that in order for these competitions to be worthwhile investments for everyone involved, our employers must be as involved as the students.

One company that understands the value of a sharp focus on job training is Hino Motors, which operates a vehicle parts plant in Marion. Hino is celebrating the addition of truck frame rails to its production lines. This expansion means a continued investment by a company that has demonstrated an interest in Arkansas that goes beyond the financial. Hino has been a partner to the Advanced Manufacturing program at Mid-South Community College in West Memphis through an annual scholarship as well as donating building and electric materials for use in the classroom.

It is always easier to inspire interest in education when you can show the tangible and practical result of the learning and the training. The more Arkansas educators and businesses we have

recognize that, the more we can continue to bring high-quality jobs to State, and keep our qualified graduates here. It will ensure that our economy, and our quality of life, continue to improve.