

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**BUSINESS AND EDUCATION LEADERS HIGHLIGHT IMPORTANCE OF CAREER AND TECHNICAL
EDUCATION IN SOLVING PENNSYLVANIA'S WORKFORCE SHORTAGES**

*Event showcases hands-on learning opportunities at Carlisle Area School District's
Center for Careers and Technology*

CARLISLE, PA – Adequately funded schools that can provide “deeper learning” opportunities for students are a critical investment in Pennsylvania’s future workforce and economy.

That was the message delivered by a group of leaders from the business and education communities Thursday at the Carlisle Area School District’s Center for Careers and Technology in Carlisle. The leaders highlighted the impressive programs offered at CASD to give students real-world experience that will help them find rewarding, solid careers in the job market of today and tomorrow. The deeper learning skills that these programs teach, such as effective communication, collaboration, and critical thinking, are some of the most important elements that Pennsylvania employers seek in new hires.

Participants in the event included the **Honorable Pedro Rivera**, Secretary of Education, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; **State Representative Barbara Gleim**; **State Representative Torren Ecker**; **Dr. Albert Parrillo**, Director of Careers and Technology Education, Carlisle Area School District; Carlisle students **Brooke Blackledge** and **Xander Pechart**; **Michelle Lisk**, a Carlisle Area Chamber of Commerce Board member and CEO of SYNERGY HomeCare Mid Penn; and **Denise Garman**, Manager of Community Relations and Volunteers at UPMC Carlisle Hospital and member of the school district’s Occupational Advisory Committee.

ReadyNation Director Steve Doster opened by emphasizing the scope of the “skills gap” problem. He noted that according to the Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry, workforce readiness gaps are the single most important issue facing Pennsylvania businesses today. He also noted that by 2024, Pennsylvania will need at least half of its population to have some type of postsecondary education, but only 43 percent of working-age Pennsylvanians today have that level of education.

Dr. Parrillo then highlighted how the Carlisle Area School District’s Center for Careers and Technology is working to close this “skills gap” problem. There, local businesses and other community organizations are working with the school district to help train students with the cognitive and collaborative skills needed in the

modern workforce. New courses in aerospace engineering, marketing, business management/global markets and digital media have just been announced for the 2020-2021 academic year.

The Center provides “deeper learning” opportunities annually for more than one-third of the District’s 1,500 high school students. These opportunities include partnerships with regional businesses, which are critical to keeping the Center’s programs relevant to ever-changing career paths in south central Pennsylvania and beyond.

These deeper learning opportunities help impart the types of “executive-functioning” abilities that employers need, such as effective collaboration, communication, and creative problem solving. Programs like the ones at the Center are important investments in preparing students for additional post-secondary training and in-demand careers yielding family-sustaining wages.

Michelle Lisk, a Carlisle Area Chamber of Commerce Board member, reinforced this point and made it clear that business leaders are united in their concerns about the state’s future workforce. They’re already seeing the problems caused by the gap between the number of available positions and the number of workers with the skills needed to fill those positions.

“Pennsylvania’s business community – whether in rural, urban, or suburban markets – has a strong stake in making sure that all of the state’s students emerge from school prepared for postsecondary education or a career,” she explained.

Other speakers included Denise Garman, Manager of Community Relations and Volunteers at UPMC Carlisle Hospital and member of the school district’s Occupational Advisory Committee, who spotlighted the hospital’s partnership with the Center for Careers and Technology. Carlisle students Brook Blackledge (early childhood education) and Xander Pechart (networking) also shared their experiences in the Center’s programs.

Finally, the speakers noted that working to eliminate funding inequity among Pennsylvania’s 500 school districts will help ensure that more schools can afford diverse and hands-on CTE-type programming that will close the skills gap and give as many students as possible the best shot to secure a successful career in the modern job market.

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