

High school seniors with work-ethic certificate

50 area employers sign on to offer perks, incentives to graduates who complete program

By Carson Gerber | Kokomo Tribune | May 30, 2018

PERU – More than 60 seniors from the three school districts in Miami County were awarded the Governor's Work Ethic Certificate during the first year the program was offered in the county.

Now, local officials hope the achievement will help meet the workforce demands for area businesses.

Sixty-two students from Peru, Maconaquah and North Miami received the certificate last week during a ceremony in which Indiana Department of Workforce Development Commissioner Fred Payne gave the keynote speech.

To receive the certificate, students had to excel in nine different areas, including teamwork, dependability and reliability. Seniors also were required to have a 98 percent or higher attendance record, and complete at least six hours of community service.

In return, around 50 employers in a six-county area agreed to offer perks and incentives to students who received the certificate.

Some of those employers include FCA Fiat Chrysler, Haynes International,

Snively Machine and Manufacturing and Orion Safety Products. Perks offered by some employers include an increase in base pay, bonus vacation, tuition reimbursement and peer mentoring.

Brooke Robertson, director of business retention for the Miami County Economic Development Authority, said the goal of the certificate is to teach students the kinds of basic work skills that employers are looking for in new workers.

"The (employers) all recognize the certificate, and they all recognize what the students have had to do to complete the certificate," she said. "When these students put in a resume, the employers understand what it means for them to get something like this."

In total, 25 seniors from both Maconaquah and North Miami completed the program, along with 12 students from Peru. Robertson said that totals 16 percent of all high school seniors in the county. Their goal was to get at least 20

percent into the program in its first year.

"We were hoping for 20 percent of all the students, but we got 16 percent," she said. "But with this being the first year that we were getting the word out, we're pretty happy about that."

MCEDA also awarded scholarships totaling \$3,000 to four students who were selected by their schools for outstanding work while completing the certification.

Robertson said the first round of Miami County students completing the certificate is a step towards creating a workforce prepared to meet the demands of area employers.

"All the employers are 100 percent on board and excited about it," she said. "Having a prepared workforce is a big issue, and, for employers, having workers with these soft skills makes them really excited."