

North Ed honors 'Jobs for Michigan's Graduates' students

BY TRAVIS SNYDER

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TRAVERSE CITY — Carson Haskin is about halfway through high school.

But when he's not doing homework, he puts on a uniform, clocks in and works for Toyota. "As a 17-year-old, I think that's pretty awesome," he said.

When Haskin is on the job, he not only helps with oil and tire maintenance, he's also learning skills such as customer service, communication, writing work orders and developing a work ethic.

His dream for the future is to

SEE GRADS PAGE 5A



Record-Eagle/Travis Snyder

NorthEd Career Tech students Carson Haskin, left, and Riley Brown display their certificates after completing the "Jobs for Michigan's Graduates" program. The two-year auto repair program provides each student with an opportunity to work with local dealerships and get hands-on learning experience.

GRADS

FROM PAGE 1A

"maybe open up my own shop."

Haskin was one of the more than 35 students who were honored Friday for their accomplishments in the "Jobs for Michigan's Graduates" program at North Ed Career Tech on Parsons Road.

The program is part of OurYouthSolutions.org, an organization that aims to help young people "find their path to education and employment success."

Roger Curtis, executive director of OurYouthSolutions.org, was among the group of educators, business leaders and legislators invited to participate in Friday's ceremony. "We're really trying to work with kids, teach them leadership skills, get them to believe in themselves, going forward," Curtis said. "Combine that with the great programs we have to offer and we feel like we've prepared these kids to become successful — no matter their plans after high school."

Riley Brown, a senior at the Career Tech Center, said she loves the program. "I want more funding for it so we can get other programs and more schools."

For Brown, "the main goal I have is to go to WyoTech, an automotive trade school in Laramie, Wyoming."

Like Haskin, she has had the opportunity to obtain



real-work experience; for her, at the local BMW dealership. "Going different places and expressing how we feel about the program and what it's done for us has been a highlight for me," she said.

The staff and teachers in the program act as guides, Haskin said. "They lead you in a different way. They're not just trying to funnel you into one direction, but give you the tools and information you need to find your own way."

"If you have a path you want to go down," Brown added, "they're going to be there for you and help you get to where you want to go. It's about getting us workforce ready."

Both agreed that they have felt empowered through their experience.

"It's a significant time investment for our sponsors, and community business partners," said Kevin Kimble, auto repair instructor at the Career Tech center, "but a lot of these kids get hired" after graduation.

Kimble said many of the students who complete the

program opt to stay in automotive careers. "I think that's due to our saturation of getting them into shops."

"It's a matter of perception versus reality: They say, 'I want to work on cars.' But when they're faced with that mountain of what it takes to learn to be able to do that, they realize it's a daunting task."

What Kimble tries to do is teach students mechanical skills that translate into any kind of repair, how to look up and follow procedures, and to give them an opportunity to build on what they've learned.

Curtis emphasized the importance of shoulder-to-shoulder guidance within the program. "It's almost like a mentorship by not only helping them graduate, but graduate with a plan — so they can find themselves in a career."

"We're really proud of the fact that 98% of the students that enter the program graduate, and 54% go on to post-secondary education," he said. "We currently have over 600 youth across the state in this

program.

"Eventually, we want it to be tens of thousands of students."

Curtis said they've been doing the JMG program for 15 years in Michigan. "We're working with 105 programs (at schools) and work with 16 Michigan Works! agencies across the state as well."

Haskin and Brown both offered this advice for students who are exploring careers and considering the Jobs for Michigan Graduates program: "Just do it!"

Special to Record-Eagle/Ryan Jarvi

Students with the "Jobs for Michigan's Graduates" program at NorthEd Career Tech's celebrated their completion of the two-year auto repair program Friday.

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