



Photos by Tony Wittkowski / HP staff

From left: Nevaeh Stone, Zion Thompson, Brianna Spencer, Amaya Gomez and Myliyah Stansberry (not pictured) wait as Mike Gross, general manager of sales at Whirlpool Corp., inspects the eggs that were secured in their carton during a mentorship program Wednesday with Jobs for Michigan's Graduates at Whirlpool's Benton Harbor Technology Center.

# Career paths and exposure

## Whirlpool program kicks off with 'egg-cellent' competition

By **ROBERT NOVAK**  
HP Staff Writer

BENTON HARBOR — Jobs for Michigan's Graduates students tested their acumen for egg safety Wednesday during a hands-on product innovation event at the Whirlpool Corp. Benton Harbor Technology Center.

About 30 Whirlpool mentors collaborated with more than 40 JMG students to design and market model cars carrying eggs. With the students and mentors divided into groups of eight, teams competed against one another to create a makeshift car that could safely bring eggs to the bottom of a ramp.

"I'm definitely a trust-the-process-



Benton Harbor High School students prepare to test their egg car during a mentorship program Wednesday with Jobs for Michigan's Graduates at Whirlpool Corp.'s Benton Harbor Technology Center.

type-of-person. Not even just in the classroom, but just in my day-to-day life," Benton Harbor High School senior and JMG youth Brianna Spencer said. "I learned that every

idea isn't a good idea, but every idea should be taken into account."

Each member of the winning team won a \$40 Amazon gift card, including Spencer who helped lead the

group to victory.

Surprises were revealed throughout the competition, where teams could pitch a business plan for additional capital to spend on their egg car, or teams could add more eggs to their car for extra points.

"This event really helps youth see career paths and allows them to talk to employers and employees of an organization that's right here in their own town," Deputy Director of Youth Solutions Sonya Blanz said. "For us, really it's all about making sure that the youth have the career development and career exposure that they need, but also the mentorship."

Whirlpool's pledge to racial equality has been an important factor in their work with JMG over the past three years, said Whirlpool Vice President of Sales Michael Gross.

He said one of the work streams of this pledge is built around strengthening communities.

"The past two years we paired Whirlpool employees with students

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## JMG

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to help them work through what happens after high school,” Gross said, who also serves as a JMG mentor. “This year, we decided to get more hands on. We thought if we could build more trust with the students early on, then it could strengthen their resumés and college applications.”

JMG, the leading program of Youth Solutions, provides youth with the skills needed to find their path in education and success in future employment.

“This is just step three of the mentorship program. We’re really just letting the students get to know the mentors before we partner them up,” JMG Specialist and Corey Sterling said. “The program, it gives the opportunity to remove barriers to employment and life skills.”

This was the third of six scheduled mentorship program events JMG will hold throughout the school year.

Sterling said mentors will take the JMG students to Kohl’s in Benton Township to shop for work clothes and hold a mock interview at a future event.

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Dionna James, senior director of sales strategy and operations at Whirlpool Corp., and Benton Harbor High School student Beautiful Beecham work on their team’s carton during a mentorship program Wednesday with Jobs for Michigan’s Graduates at Whirlpool’s Benton Harbor Technology Center.



Benton Harbor High School students Keyona Catchings and Lazarus Ross wait as their egg car is inspected for damage during a mentorship program Wednesday with Jobs for Michigan’s Graduates at Whirlpool Corp.’s Benton Harbor Technology Center.