

Tidewater Community College Hosts Project MFG Student Maritime Welding Competition & TMG Career Discovery Day

Local Students Compete in a Project MFG Maritime Welding Competition and a Career Discovery Event for Virginia Talent Pipeline Program

HAMPTON, VA, UNITED STATES, February 19, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Over 161 students, representing 10 training providers, participated in the Project MFG Maritime Welding Competition and Career Discovery Day at the Tidewater Community College Skilled Trades Academy, in Portsmouth, VA., Feb. 18.

Project MFG along with TMG's Virginia Talent Pipeline Project (VA TPP) partnered to bring awareness to the Navy's significant demand for critical trade skill by inviting local schools and technical training centers to attend a Maritime Welding Competition and Career Discovery Day. The VA TPP is one of several training pipelines creating opportunities, building the workforce, and connecting more people to the Navy mission. Project MFG seeks to engage students the Hampton Roads area by creating a maritime-focused welding and fabrication competition that highlights the manufacturing skills needed in the local industrial base workforce.



Winners of the competition are as follows: 1st place – John Smith from New Horizon CTE/Woodside Lane, 2nd place – Chris Cook from New Horizon CTE/Woodside Lane, and 3rd place – Austin Miller from The Advanced Technology Institute



Sparks Fly at Hampton Roads Project MFG Maritime Welding Competition

“Events like today’s competition further strengthen this (Virginia’s) ecosystem by bringing students, educators, employers, and industry leaders together to celebrate the skill, innovation and opportunity of our future workforce.” said Laura Hanson, Associate Vice President of Workforce Development at Tidewater Community College.



22 students participated in the Project MFG Maritime Welding Competition and Career Discovery Day at the Tidewater Community College Skilled Trades Academy

The Project MFG Maritime Welding Competition, hosted by Tidewater Community College and run by Project MFG, included 22 local competitors from area high schools and community and technical education (CTE) centers. Competitors raced against a two-hour clock to weld a model Manta Ray which is an Uncrewed Underwater Vehicle.

The competition project was designed to test the contestants' welding proficiency requiring them to follow precise instructions to complete a project while demonstrating their knowledge of welding techniques, safety procedures, and equipment handling. This Maritime Welding Competition not only showcased the students' skills but also highlighted the significance of vocational education in meeting the demands of the modern manufacturing workforce. As industries evolve, events like these play a crucial role in shaping the next generation of skilled professionals, equipping them with the skills and knowledge necessary to thrive in the manufacturing industry.

“

You have a ton of opportunity in front of you. You’re going to have awesome careers, an awesome opportunity, and you’re going to give back to people in a huge way.”

*U.S. Navy Captain Nick Levine,
Submarine Program Manager*

A panel of expert welders and industry professionals assessed the students' work, evaluating the quality of their

welds, the precision of their measurements, and their adherence to safety protocols.

The winners were announced based on their performance throughout the competition and the first, second, and third-place winners received prizes including a brand-new welding hood and tools from Project MFG! In addition to the prize packs, the first, second, and third-place winners were invited to participate in Project MFG’s National Maritime Championship May 5, 2026 in San Diego, California.

Winners of the competition are as follows:

1st place – John Smith from New Horizon CTE- Woodside Lane

2nd place – Chris Cook from New Horizon CTE- Woodside Lane

3rd place – Austin Miller from Advanced Technology Institute

The Career Discovery Day was held in parallel to the Maritime Welding Competition and managed by the VA TPP drew over 161 students who were given the opportunity to speak with potential employers to learn about their role in the defense industrial base and the available opportunities in critical shipbuilding and ship sustainment trades. Program participants also had the chance to gain exposure to local industries and opportunities in modern manufacturing through facilities tours at Bauer Compressors, Bay Metals, and Tecnico, along with educational breakout sessions designed to deepen their understanding of industry expectations and opportunities.

As part of the Career Discovery event, Project MFG hosted a raffle awarding one school an Oculus device and a year-long subscription to SkillVeri, designed to introduce students to the skilled trades through an immersive, gamified learning experience. The prize was awarded to instructor Pierrette Swan of New Horizons CTE – Woodside Lane.

U.S. Navy Captain Nick Levine, Program Manager for In-Service Attack Submarines, who oversees critical submarine readiness and sustainment efforts delivered a keynote speech at the highlighting the vital role skilled trade professionals play in national safety and the Navy's commitment to developing future generations through programs like the Talent Pipeline.

“You have a ton of opportunity in front of you, Captain Levine shares. “You should be excited. You should be smiling. You’re going to have awesome careers, an awesome opportunity, and you’re going to give back to people in a huge way.”

Events like this are addressing trade skill gaps impacting the Navy's success in building and maintaining Navy platforms and systems. Hiring new, skilled employees and bolstering our existing workforce requires a networked community and innovative approaches to train and employ skilled workers.

For more information on the Virginia Talent Pipeline Project, visit:

<https://dibtalentpipeline.com/virginia>

For more information on Project MFG, visit: www.projectmfg.com

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