

Woodstock Community Unit School District 200

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Ford dealer donates car, training opportunity for WHS auto students

A vehicle donation and new partnership with Ford Motor Company and a Woodstock car dealership will help Woodstock High School auto service classes run like a finely tuned machine.

Jason Gomez, regional technical talent placement specialist with Ford Motor Company, explained that Ford has an initiative to get local car dealers involved with schools in their local community.

Rick Gerardi, parts and services coordinator at Bull Valley Ford, suggested working with Woodstock High School and connected with auto teacher Brandon Spiller to start an ACE (Automotive Career Exploration) program.

“What it does is allow the students at Woodstock to have access to our online training. It’s the same training that his technicians get in the shop,” Gomez said.

Students can print out certifications after they finish different sections of the training. They can then work for Bull Valley Ford, which can transfer the credit for the training, or put the certificates on their resumes if they want to go into the auto industry elsewhere.

“This gave us the opportunity for kids to go to the next level of training,” Gerardi said.

Gerardi said he has had some Woodstock High School students work part-time, but COVID-19 has slowed things down a bit. He hopes to build the partnership further and is willing to come to classes to talk to students about the auto industry.

On March 17, Gerardi and Gomez delivered a 2010 Ford Fiesta to the high school that students can work on for tire rotations, oil changes, spark plug inspection and other maintenance.

“Kids are going to love it. It’s our newest car by far, and it’s probably our best running car, so that will be a great upgrade for us,” Spiller said. “This will be a great car for us for hands-on instruction with newer technology in the shop.”

Nathan Ratliff, WHS senior, climbed into the driver’s seat of the donated Ford and said he’s excited about the opportunity to work on it for the remainder of the semester.

“It’s going to be nice to have a car that’s closer to what we also drive so that we can apply the knowledge that we get from this to our own vehicles and into our own daily lives,” he said.