Engineering Trip Turned Upside Down

By: Lasherica Thornton

            On the weekend of September 19, the Career and Technical Center’s Engineering Class drove to Raymond, MS with the intentions to attend a Vex Robotics Workshop/Competition. The trip was turned upside down when they found the workshop had been cancelled.

Jennifer Bennett, engineering teacher, would not let the trip be a waste of the students’ valuable time. Fortunately, Bennett contacted a friend who happened to be the Senior Engineering Manager of the Nissan Plant. The engineering manager took the entire class on a behind the scenes tour of the plant in Canton. Coincidently, the tour educated the class on certain aspects that they are currently studying.

Bennett said, “On the tour the engineers were able to share with us aspects of their work that my students could directly relate to what they are learning in our classroom. A few examples include how they program robots, how they use 3D modeling, and how they generate blueprints of those models.”

Both Bennett and her students were privileged to have the opportunity to receive a personal tour from experienced professionals, the senior engineering manager and a senior engineer. Bruce High School student Kaleb Redwine was among students in the class who enjoyed the trip. To Redwine, it was surreal to learn that all of the wiring and interior were done by hand. Other than learning interesting facts, there were exciting parts of the tour.

Redwine exclaimed, “Being able to see all the big robots and seeing a sheet of metal turn into an actual car was amazing!”

This trip is only the beginning of bigger and better plans for the class. As far as the classroom setting goes, Bennett is constantly receiving instructional equipment for the students. Most recently, 3D printers have been installed which allow students to print their favorite objects out in a 3D model. Besides using instructional equipment, they have been learning to build and program Vex robots. In the future, Bennett has plans to visit several local manufactures and industries to educate her students about a variety of engineering disciplines. She said that she encourages any students that love to think out-of-the-box, enjoy a good challenge, and want to have fun learning about the highest demand career choice one could ever make to join the class for all the excitement they have in store.

“Despite the robotics competition training being cancelled,” Bennett added, “our competition team is fully charged to begin preparing for our first competition at the Tupelo ICC campus in November.”