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FEATURED TOP STORY

Egg Harbor Township schools tout program connecting students to yacht company

Christopher Doyle

Nov 16, 2022



Officials tour Viking Yacht Company's facility in Bass River Township on Wednesday as part of a presentation on its pre-apprenticeship program with Egg Harbor Township schools.

Chris Doyle, Staff Writer

Christopher Doyle





Hurricane Sandy 10 Years Later; What We Learned was moderated by Meteorologist Joe Martucci. This free event was held at the newly opened New Standard Senior Living in Egg Harbor Township on Wednesday, Oct. 26. Superstorm Sandy made landfall around 6:30 p.m. near Brigantine on Oct. 29, 2012. It's the fourth costliest tropical system in the United States' history and was responsible for forty deaths in New Jersey alone. Those in attendance got to hear from a five person panel, local to South Jersey. - Vince Jones, Director, Atlantic County Office of Emergency Management - Jim Eberwine, Absecon Emergency Manager and retired National Weather Service Meteorologist - Ryan D. Lewis, Director, Electric Operations, Atlantic City Electric - Dean Iovino from the National Weather Service in Mount Holly - Joanne Garofolo, Advanced Disaster Recovery Inc.

BASS RIVER TOWNSHIP — South Jersey is celebrating the launch of new trade programs for high school students.

Viking Yacht Company hosted Egg Harbor Township officials and alumni, along with state and federal labor officials, to celebrate the eighth annual National Apprenticeship Week.

The event, held at the Viking headquarters in New Gretna, focused on the partnership between Viking and Egg Harbor Township schools and the growing apprenticeship and vocational opportunities for teenagers and young adults in South Jersey.

Egg Harbor Township Superintendent Kim Gruccio said she wanted to make students and families more aware of the postsecondary options available to them, aside from going to college.

She said the pre-apprenticeship programs would help students interested in manual labor learn more about the different trades and connect with area businesses.

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"We're telling parents, it's not all about going to college, it's not all about
paying thousands and thousand of dollars," Gruccio said. "Let the kids go out
and learn."



Representatives from the New Jersey Department of Labor & Workforce Development were on hand to praise the program.

Labor Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo said it was a priority of the Murphy administration to increase apprenticeship opportunities for students and young adults. He said the administration was seeking to develop preapprenticeship programs at schools throughout the state, making it easier for students to get credit for trade work.

"The ROI (return on investment) on apprenticeship is real," Asaro-Angelo said.

Carmelita Graham, director of vocational education and career and technical education for Egg Harbor Township schools, said districts across the state were beginning to embrace pre-apprenticeship programs.

She said the district took pride in seeing its students excel in different trades during and after high school.

"It's been really special," Graham said.



School board president, challenger hold top spots in Greater Egg Harbor election

The programs being highlighted were the district's Youth Transition to Work and Pre-apprenticeship in Career Education programs. The former helps Egg Harbor Township upperclassmen, as well as those not enrolled in school between ages 16 and 24, connect with apprenticeship opportunities in the area. It was funded by a state Labor Department grant in June worth more than \$424,000. The latter combines industry-based training and instructional curricula to set students on the fast track to earning advanced credentials in the trades. It is designed to benefit students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.

Viking Yachts CEO Pat Healey said he was excited to develop the shipwright industry in Atlantic County municipalities such as Egg Harbor Township, an area that has historically been a labor feeder to the Atlantic City casinos.

"We're just excited for what this alliance can produce," Healey said.

Fran Kuhn, executive director of Atlantic County Workforce Development, agreed pre-apprentice programs could help diversify the local economy. He said establishing working relationships with area employers early in people's careers would develop the local workforce and help new industries flourish.

"We have a process now where we can start building that pipeline, for developing that ongoing talent pool, which I'm super excited about," Kuhn said.

Albert Mury, general manager of South Jersey Yacht Sales, said preapprenticeship programs were especially useful of late to businesses. He said the tight labor market had affected his company, with workers commanding higher wages and adding to labor costs. The apprenticeships would help grow the workforce and make it less costly to keep workers.



Linwood ballot question failing, Northfield's and Port Republic's passing

Viking Yachts Executive Vice President Drew Davala said it has been an ideal time for workers to enter the yacht-manufacturing business. He said demand for yachts was high and that the company had hired about 450 people in the past year. With the current strength of the industry, Davala said he was confident the company could withstand any possible economic downturn.

"We're going full steam ahead," Davala said.

Lee Weiler, who graduated from Egg Harbor Township High School last year after moving from a school in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, participated in the pre-apprenticeship program. He said the program connected him with

his current job at South Jersey Yacht Sales and helped give him confidence at a new school for his senior year.

"Moving my senior year was pretty nerve-racking," Wilder said. "Coming to Egg Harbor Township and starting out this new program was amazing to me."

Corem Joseph, another graduate of the Egg Harbor Township class of 2022, now works at Viking Yachts. An immigrant from Haiti, Joseph also said the pre-apprenticeship program offered an important opportunity.

"My journey here has been awesome," Joseph said.



Children's Choir of Southern New Jersey to debut Thursday

Egg Harbor Township Mayor Paul Hodson said he was glad to see the marine industry make connections in the township. He said establishing relationships with companies such as Viking Yachts would add to the municipality's other flagship businesses, such as Spencer's and Spirit Halloween, which is headquartered in the township.

"We're lucky in this area," Hodson said. "It's great to offer this opportunity for our children in our high school to work with the boat industry."

The program received federal praise as well. John Martinez, an apprenticeship and training representative from the U.S. Department of Labor, said the Egg Harbor Township program was aligned with the federal goal of creating more jobs for young Americans in the trades.

"This partnership is the ideal model of what we're looking for," Martinez said.

Gruccio stressed that pursuing a vocational career did not foreclose the possibility of exploring options for a college education later. She said the programs would allow students to find their own career path.

"It's a different mindset," Gruccio said. "It's meeting kids' needs by opportunities."

GALLERY: Egg Harbor Township School District touts program connecting students to yacht company

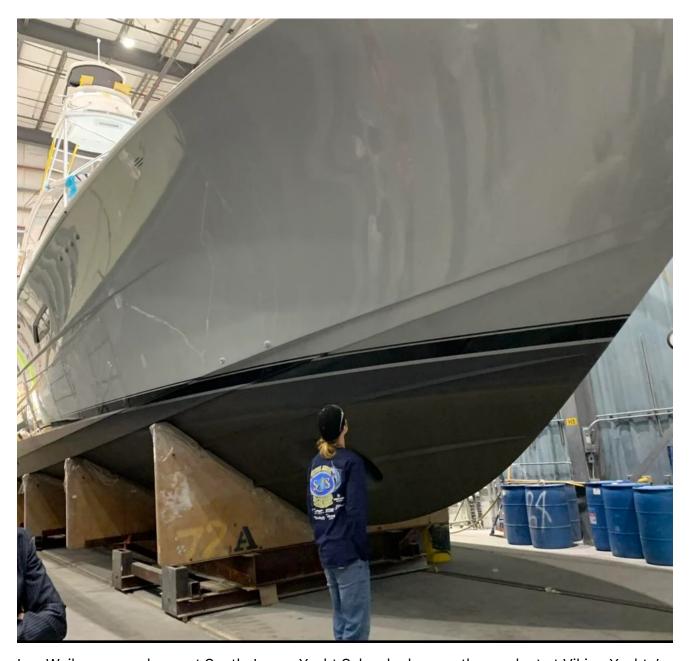


Officials tour Viking Yacht Company's facility in Bass River Township on Wednesday as part of a presentation on its pre-apprenticeship program with Egg Harbor Township schools.

Chris Doyle, Staff Writer



Viking Executive Vice President Drew Davala showing a yacht under construction. Chris Doyle, Staff Writer



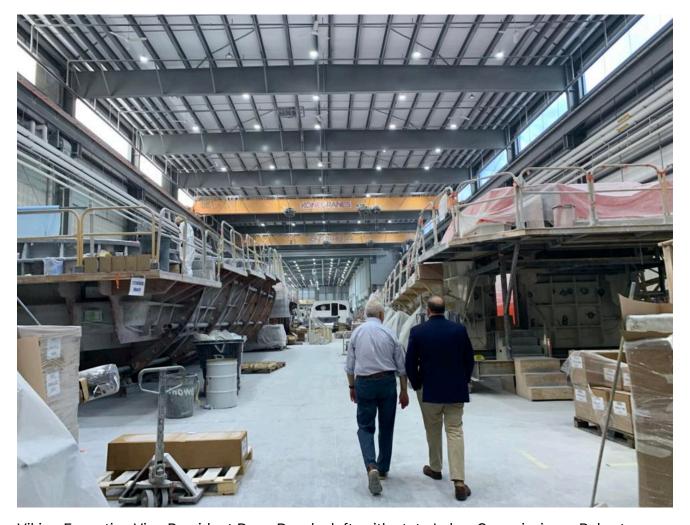
Lee Weiler, an employee at South Jersey Yacht Sales, looks over the product at Viking Yachts' factory.



Viking Yachts factory in New Gretna Chris Doyle, Staff Writer



Viking Executive Vice President Drew Davala, left, leads a tour of Viking facility with state Labor Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo, right, looking on.



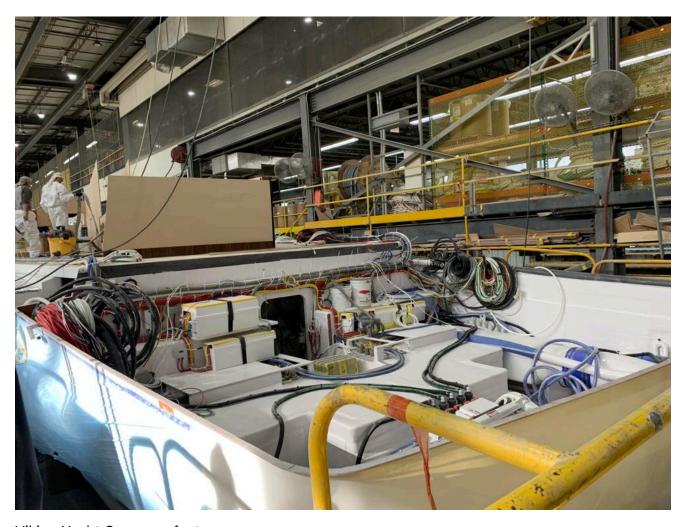
Viking Executive Vice President Drew Davala, left, with state Labor Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo



Viking Executive Vice President Drew Davala discusses factory with onlookers. Chris Doyle, Staff Writer



Viking Yacht Company factory Chris Doyle, Staff Writer



Viking Yacht Company factory Chris Doyle, Staff Writer



Viking Executive Vice President Drew Davala, right, with state Labor Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo



New Jersey Labor Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo, center, and Egg Harbor Township Mayor Paul Hodson, left, discuss yachts with Viking Yacht Company Vice President Drew Davala.



Viking Yacht Company Factory Chris Doyle, Staff Writer



Corem Joseph, a graduate of Egg Harbor Township High School, works at Viking Yachts. The immigrant from Haiti said the pre-apprenticeship program offered an important opportunity. Chris Doyle, Staff Writer



Egg Harbor Superintendent Kim Gruccio Chris Doyle, Staff Writer

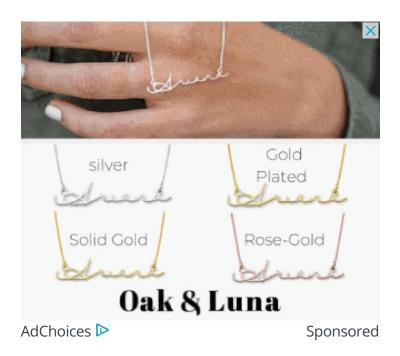
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