Written by Mark Jaeger
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OZAUKEE COUNTY STUDENTS and mentors celebrated the completion last week of the Workforce 2020 Youth Apprenticeship during an awards program at the Cedarburg Cultural Center (top photo). Local graduates included (upper left photo, from left) Grafton High School Assistant Principal Aaron Hiltz, students Marie Tobianski, Ryan Stauske, Casey Hans and Workforce 2020 Coordinator John Higgins; (lower left photo) Ozaukee High School Workforce 2020 Coordinator Deanne Nelson, James Lynch Belzer of Ozaukee High School and Mariah Shaver of Random Lake High School; and Port Washington High School students (lower right photo) Colin Baake, Catherine Boldig, Kimberly Boldig and Workforce 2020 Business Co-Chairman Dawn Nimtz. *Photos by Mark Jaeger*Graduation came early for 14 Ozaukee County high-school students last week who celebrated the completion of Workforce 2020 youth apprenticeships.

The apprenticeship program's 16th graduation ceremony was held at the Cedarburg Cultural Center.

The Workforce 2020 consortium provides real-word work experiences to students through a collaboration of area schools and private employers.

Participating students are in their junior or senior years who gain certificates of occupational proficiency in a specific industry during one- and two-year training programs. This year's program included students from Port Washington, Grafton, Ozaukee, Cedarburg and Random Lake high schools.

Graduating from the auto technician apprenticeship program were: Colin Baake of Port Washington High School, who was mentored by Brian O'Donnell of Homestead Auto in Saukville; Ryan Stauske of Grafton High School, mentored by Dennis Erovick of Car Maid Service in Cedarburg; Jacob Beck of Cedarburg High School, mentored by George Heimsch of Krueger's Auto Tech in Cedarburg; and Matt Petrovic of Cedarburg High School, mentored by Dennis Krings of Cedarburg Auto.

Completing the welding apprenticeship was Casey Hans of Grafton High School, mentored by Dawn Kubiak of MPE in Milwaukee.

Graduating from the nursing assistant apprenticeship were: Catherine Boldig and Kimberly Boldig, both of Port Washington High School, and James Lynch-Belzer and Kayla McConnell, both of Ozaukee High School, who were all mentored by Catherine Torcivia of the Harbor Club in Port Washington; Marie Tobianski of Grafton High School, mentored by Candie Schilling of Cedar Springs Rehabilitation Center in Cedarburg; Desiree Deming of Cedarburg High School, mentored by Sue Polster of Ivy Manor senior residence in Jackson; Dareuss Jackson and Kendall Krombach, both of Cedarburg High School, mentored by Dawn Nimtz of Lasata Care Center in Cedarburg; and Maria Shaver of Random Lake High School, mentored by Pam Zastrow of Gables on the Pond senior residence in Random Lake.

Guest speakers during the commencement were Gary Pfannerstill, vice president of manufacturing at MPE in Milwaukee, a program host company, and apprentices Kendall Krombach and Jacob Beck.

Workforce 2020 Coordinator John Higgins said the mentorship program has struggled to place students recently, one more repercussion of the troubled economic times.

"Yes, it has been more difficult to find mentor matches because of the economy, but I am optimistic," Higgins said.

"We have a few very supportive employers and will continue to search for placements."

He said there are more than a dozen students awaiting apprenticeship placements for the coming year, and several job opportunities awaiting interested students.

"Right now I need placements for four finance students, five design and drafting students, two auto-tech students and two information-tech students," Higgins said.

"In addition, we have openings for one manufacturing student and three certified nursing

assistant students."

To contact Higgins about the program, call 268-6074 or e-mail john.higgins@pwssd.k12.wi.us.