



South Jersey Teachers Get Schooled about Local Businesses

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SALEM, N.J. -

School may be out for the summer, but 19 area teachers are getting a lesson or two about South Jersey businesses.

Wednesday, July 11th, marked day three of the 27th annual South Jersey Summer Institute for Educators.

"It is run by the South Jersey Chamber Foundation that is a part of the South Jersey Chamber of Commerce," said Christina Renna, vice president of the Chamber of Commerce Southern New Jersey.

"It is a program that takes area teachers from the entire South Jersey region for three weeks and allows them to tour businesses throughout the entire region from Atlantic County all the way up to Burlington County."

The three-week program aims to get teachers into area businesses to get a look at what opportunities are out there for their students.

"Whether or not these educators are teaching high-school kids that will not go on to college and just graduate or go on to be an engineer," said Renna, regarding the goals behind getting the teachers to visit South Jersey businesses, "we really run the gamut of bringing them to different kinds of companies with all different varieties of jobs to

encourage them to take the lessons they learn and then allow their students to learn about it and hopefully stay in South Jersey to work."

They visit 20 businesses along the way. Wednesday's agenda took them to Mannington Mills, a fourth generation family-owned flooring manufacturer that's headquartered in Salem County, but has plants all over the country and in the UK.

"What a fabulous idea of getting our educators who are teaching our young folks to learn about business ... different kinds of business and also different kinds of business in the South Jersey area," said Keith Campbell, chairman of the board at Mannington Mills.

The educators learned the history of the company and then went on a tour of the facility.

"So many of these companies are national or even international companies and they're right in our backyard," said Renna, "and teachers don't know they exist, or know the kinds of jobs that are available to expose their students."

"I just thought it would be really interesting to step out of the classroom to see what jobs are available," said Francesca Schiavo, a 7th grade social studies teacher at Ann A. Mullen Middle School in Sicklerville, who's participating in the program. "[Also to see] what skills they're looking for because a lot of times we get so caught up in our curriculum we forget to teach the actual things that the kids will need to be prepared for the workforce."

In its 27 years, they've graduated more than 600 teachers from the South Jersey Summer Institute for Educators and they hope this group will take everything they learn over the three weeks and bring it right back into the classroom come fall.