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Media release

For immediate use



Workchoice Day pupils visit Service Engineers Ltd

First to arrive for the morning session were the year 12 students from Henderson High. They were welcomed by managing director Stewart Lodge, who commended them on taking this opportunity to have a look at a general engineering company, the largest on Auckland's North Shore.

“Service Engineers is keen to help young people get into engineering; our apprentices, and more than 30 have completed their apprenticeships, do us proud by taking top honours. Some have gone on to take advanced trade certificates and become trainers or assessors. Some have become project managers, while others have founded their own businesses. I hope you find some inspiration to take away from your visit.”

Alicia Howell, the company's Human Resources and OSH Officer, handed out Corporate brochures, Health & Safety Manuals, protective glasses and ear-plugs and checked that the students had appropriate footwear. Bruce Riddell conducted the tour, beginning with the fabrication workshop. They saw large diameter steel pipes with perfect welds marked as having passed inspection. “These are bound for a bridge at the Northern Gateway Extension,” Bruce informed them. “And this fully assembled pump skid will go into a power substation in Fiji. We have all kinds of light and heavy fabrication in progress, from steel staircases for the sides on tanks to screw conveyors and sludge containers for waste water treatment.”

Moving on to the Metal Centre, the students were informed that this fulfils

most of Service Engineers' plate supply and cutting requirements, as well as providing plate-cutting services to clients throughout the North Island. At the heart of the Metal Centre is a Kinetic 3000 CNC (Computer Numerical Control) machine, the yield from which in both small job lots and bulk cutting is optimised by production planning and nesting. Once a client's drawings have been received and catalogued, the Metal Centre can be relied upon to provide standard items or job lots on an as-needed basis.

In the Stainless Steel Fabrication shop, Grant Gurau, a master welder, was ready to demonstrate his craft. He had tack-welded two pieces of stainless steel tubing and clamped them at bench level. He explained how the tungsten electrode holds the arc, and why argon gas is used to keep away oxygen. Issuing welder's helmets to half a dozen students, he made sure they understood that that they should keep the visors down throughout the weld. They were encouraged to look closely and watch the tig rod being fed to the melting point. When he finished, the students asked Grant about the pay rates for welders. He disclosed his annual earnings as a contract welder. The students were suitably impressed.

Their next port of call was the Machine Shop, which is managed by Shane Lodge, Stewart's brother. Well equipped with modern and efficient machinery, the Machine Shop gave the students an insight into a range of processes, including turning, milling, drilling, broaching, pressing and grinding. It is staffed by qualified tradesmen from diverse backgrounds and experience.

The Lodge brothers have found another outlet for their preoccupation with precision: dragsters and classic motorcycle racing. Bruce Riddell is a fan. "The rail has done 350kph and the orange car (a Ford Pop fitted with a 350 Chevy 700 horse power engine) gets up to 225kph down the straight at Meremere. It's not just about speed, it's about engineering science, about knowing how, for example, to take the weight out of a hub to make the car go faster!"

Bruce called Shane to start up the Ford and when he obliged, the students realised there was another reason they'd been issued with ear-plugs!

It was almost time for the lunch that Alicia Howell had organised, but not before the enthusiastic Bruce tested his students with some questions about what they'd learnt. There were beanies and caps as prizes and this word of encouragement: "Always strive to be the best you can be. You may start off on the shop floor, but you can become the boss!"

After lunch, Henderson High teacher Noel Te Tai thanked Service Engineers for "delivering an intense introduction to general engineering and providing some highly valued career directions. On an NCEA rating, you would have been credited with 'Excellent'. We appreciate the way you made us feel welcome and made your people available to show us so much and give so much of their day when time is money. I know that back at school, the students will be motivated to re-confirm their commitment to careers in engineering."

In the afternoon, students from Orewa College, eight young men and three young women, took their turn for the Service Engineers tour. Like their predecessors, they were given a copy of the SCNZ booklet 'Careers in Steel'.

What they would also take away from their Workchoice Day visit was a strong impression of a family oriented company employing some 50 people who enjoy, as Peter Lodge, father of Stewart and Shane and company founder, put it, "tackling those technically and logistically demanding projects."

Captions:

1. Bruce Riddell showing Henderson High students the large steel pipes will be used in the bridge at the Northern Gateway Extension.
2. Orewa College students inspect this fully assembled pump skid to be shipped to Fiji.
3. The Kinetic 3000 CNC machine cuts steel plate with speed and precision.

4. A stainless steel welder demonstrates his craft.
5. Time to inspect the work done by a modern CNC lathe.
6. A Ford Popular re-engineered for drag racing.

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