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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Families, Students Explore Energy Careers at CVTC

Careers in Energy Week Marked at Energy Education Center

Eau Claire, WI – Crouching together inside a simulated trench with a sand-covered floor, Ellie Rumphol placed a section of plastic pipe in a fusing machine as her 9-year-old son, Darius, looked on. Yes, this is what mom does at school during the day, and in a few months when she completes the Gas Utility Construction & Service program at Chippewa Valley Technical College, she may be inside a real trench outside working with real natural gas lines.

Rumphol, a 2010 Eau Claire Memorial High School graduate, had the opportunity to show her son some of what she’s learned as the Gas Utility program celebrated Friends and Family Day on Friday, Oct. 18, at the conclusion of Careers in Energy Week at CVTC’s Energy Education Center.

The Wisconsin Energy Workforce Consortium sponsors Careers in Energy Week in the state to encourage careers in energy fields and combat a growing shortage of trained workers.

“As we transition to a landscape that's increasingly powered by a cleaner energy, we need to work with schools like CVTC to educate the workforce of tomorrow,” BJ Rauckman, senior director of distribution operations for Xcel Energy, said in remarks starting off the day. “We've got line tech, gas utility tech, plant maintenance, mechanic, designer and engineer jobs, and these are just some of the career opportunities. Recent findings suggest, looking out 10 years, 34 percent of those key workers are going to be eligible for retirement.”

Rumphol is happy she chose an energy career. “I wanted to work outside, and the need for gas workers in our area is pretty high,” she said.

“If you work in an energy field like electricity or gas, people will always need those things,” said Nate Nodolf, a Cornell native now working for Eau Claire Electric Co-op. He completed CVTC’s Electric Power Distribution program in 2003. “The jobs are never going to go away. And when you look at the workforce age now, we have a lot of guys there that are getting up to the retirement age.”

The Friends and Families Day was a chance for parents to get a look at what their children were learning to do at CVTC. Aaron Maves thinks his son, Rylan, a 2017 Elk Mound High School graduate, had chosen well.

"It's a pretty stable career," Aaron Maves said. "It's something that a guy could do for 30 years and retire and have a good life. Rylan's a hardworking kid, very meticulous and a little bit of a perfectionist, but he didn't know what he wanted to do. I saw advertisements for the open house here and encouraged him to come down and just take a look. He got signed up."

While many parents of the 15 program students were at the event, the situation was reversed for Rumphol and her son.

"I talked to him quite a bit about it and he's seen that I'm interested in it," Rumphol said. I've brought him examples from school, like a pipe I fused together. I figured today would be a good opportunity to show him what it's all about."

It was also a good opportunity for Alex Korenuk, an Altoona High School senior who has been admitted to the program starting in June 2020. Instructor RC Jensen gave Korenuk a preview by allowing him to try his hand at fusing two sections of two-inch pipe using a butt fusion machine.

"I think it went pretty smooth," Korenuk said. "I had good people telling me what to do. I just got instruction, then did it. I can't wait till I start the program."

At the start of the day, Scott Hodak, chief of the office of economic advisors with the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, presented a signed proclamation on Careers in Energy Week from Gov. Tony Evers.

"I just want to say what you do is important," Hodak told the students and energy workers present. "We don't think about it ourselves until the power actually goes out and it takes somebody to fix it. It takes actual boots on the ground."

With over 155 programs offered both online and on-campus, Chippewa Valley Technical College delivers superior, progressive technical education which improves the lives of students, meets the workforce needs of the region, and strengthens the community. CVTC programs are designed with input of business and industry to prepare graduates for today's jobs, with 95 percent employed within six months of graduation and associate degree graduates earning an average annual salary of \$46,816.

Cutlines:

Ellie photo

CVTC Gas Utility Construction & Service student Ellie Rumphol shows her son, Darius, how she is learning to fuse plastic pipes inside a trench simulator used for training during a program Friends and Family Day held in conjunction with Careers in Energy Week at CVTC's Energy Education Center October 18.

Elk Mound photo

Aaron Maves of Elk Mound shows a part from a gas utility line to CVTC instructor RC Jensen, right, while Maves' wife, April and son, Rylan, look on during the Friends and Family Day for the Gas Utility program held in conjunction with Careers in Energy Week Oct. 18.

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