

U.S. Sen. visits biotechnology students



By Jennifer Hayes

Sen. Ted Kaufman (D-Del.) talks with biotechnology student Kasey Cosden about her work in the lab during his visit to St. Georges Technical High School Jan. 8.

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By Jennifer Hayes

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St. Georges, Del. -

On an average day inside the biotechnology lab at St. Georges Technical High School, students can be found extracting DNA from strawberry and kiwi, preparing general solutions, ordering supplies or even performing forensic investigations.

Students master basic laboratory procedures and put their math and science skills to the test as they train for entry-level positions in Delaware's biotech industry.

Biotechnology instructor Florence Malinowski created the program three years ago to further students' opportunities in the biotechnology field and to provide the state with well-trained, entry-level scientists.

"By reaching them at this earlier stage in their life, we'll get them interested in science, they'll further their education and be future scientists in the state of Delaware," she said.

St. Georges is the only school in the state to offer a biotechnology program at the high school

level, which is why Sen. Ted Kaufman (D-Del.) paid a visit to Malinowski's biotechnology class Jan. 8.

Kaufman introduced the STEM Education Coordination Act last year, which would ensure federal dollars are spent efficiently and effectively in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics education areas.

Kaufman said these areas provide the greatest opportunities for the economic future of the country.

"If the United States is going to be successful, looking into 2020 or 2030, we have to have the industries in these areas," he said. "If we don't have the people, we can't have the jobs in the industries. If we don't have the industries, we can't have the jobs."

Kaufman said Delaware has developed a good reputation of having high school and college graduates come out of Delaware schools ready to go to work in the STEM industry, as well as creating industries for the students to work.

Kaufman said the biotechnology program at St. Georges provides students with the opportunities to succeed in the STEM fields.

"The school is impressive, the people there are impressive and the vo-tech system is impressive," he said.

Junior Skyler French said he joined the biotechnology program two years ago. He said many jobs will become open in the field and he is developing skills that will set him apart from others.

"We're learning things college kids haven't even learned yet," he said.

Malinowski said the program is broad, covering a variety of careers in the industry, including pharmaceutical research, veterinary medicine, marine biology and medical technology.

She said the school has plans to have a green house built, which will allow the program to include plant biotechnology.

Kaufman told the students that in the last 10 years, many of the country's jobs were concentrated in housing, consumer products or finance, but as the United States comes out of the recession, that will no longer be the case.

"Where we're going to have to look, a lot of it has to deal with STEM," he said. "It's going to be businesses in biotech and green jobs, which are mostly technology based."

Kaufman said the education the students receive in the program is beneficial in any career they decide to pursue.

"I think you'll find it provides so much of what people are looking for," he said. "It's a challenging job and you're making a difference."

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