

OTTAWA AREA INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL DISTRICT

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES BUILDING 13565 Port Sheldon Street Holland, MI 49424

(616) 738-8940 1-877-702-8600 FAX (616) 738-8946 www.oaisd.org

Mission Statement: We provide and enrich educational opportunities for students, schools, and communities. **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** November 12, 2015 Contact: Michelle Ready Director of Communications and Marketing (616) 738-8940 Ext. 4093 <u>mready@oaisd.org</u>

## STUDENTS FIRST IN NATION TO EARN OSHA AGRICULTURAL ENDORSEMENT

## Careerline Tech Center partners with OSHA, MSU and Michigan Farm Bureau to develop new industry-appropriate credential.

**Holland, MI** -- Students in the Careerline Tech Center (CTC) Environmental & Agricultural Science program are the first in the nation to receive a new credential that not only certifies their job safety skills, but also ensures students are well prepared for an industry that ranks among the most hazardous in the nation according to the United States Department of Labor.

Over the course of a year, an instructional team at CTC worked collaboratively with OSHA Trainer/Safety and Health Consultant Tammy Clark to create a safety program geared toward agriculture with OSHA approval that would prepare high school juniors and seniors for careers in the environmental and agricultural sciences. The result was the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) General Industry 10-Hour Certification with an Agricultural Endorsement.

Agricultural workers risk exposure to pesticides sprayed on crops or plants, tractors and other farm machinery that can cause serious injury, and those who work directly with animals risk being bitten or kicked.

"We wanted to give Tech Center students the right tools to be safe on the job, but we didn't feel the standard construction, maritime and general OSHA 10-Hour certifications met the needs of the agricultural industry," said Tony McCaul, CTC instructor for Environmental & Agricultural Sciences.

"There is no other training in the U.S. with this federally recognized endorsement," said Clark. "Having an OSHA General Industry 10-Hour Certification with an Agricultural Endorsement will give the students a distinct advantage over other potential employee's resumes."

Students received training in elements of other certified OSHA programs along with agriculture-specific education to create the new endorsement. Industry experts Dennis Pennington, senior bioenergy educator at Michigan State University Extension and Craig Anderson, manager of agricultural labor and safety services at Michigan Farm Bureau were brought in to discuss specific safety issues in-depth with students.

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Pennington conducted a hands-on lab explaining fertilizer and pesticide safety with a focus on potential hazards when using equipment and mixing fertilizers. Anderson presented an overview of general animal safety/behavior, tractor safety, farm-specific hazards and hazardous chemicals among other possible safety concerns.

"Working closely with OSHA allowed us to secure federal recognition of the program," Clark said. "These CTC students are the first in the nation to receive this certification which is quite a feat."

Clark said she will eventually offer this training to the agriculture industry, but that won't happen for at least another year. Until that time, the endorsement is exclusively available to CTC students.

Dave Searles, director for Careerline Tech Center, expressed his appreciation for this instructional team that identified a potential safety gap and chose to develop something more for their students than what existed. "The goal of CTC is to prepare all of our students to be career and college ready. This team worked hard to find a way to help students graduate with the skills they need to be safe and successful," Searles said. "We are proud to send our students out into the workforce with the first OSHA General Industry 10-Hour Certification with an Agricultural Endorsement."

The federally recognized Agriculture Endorsement is the first step in recognizing the need for agriculture-specific safety training and agriculture certification training program.

The CTC Environmental & Agricultural Sciences instructional team that worked on the development of this new endorsement includes: Instructor Katie Hill, Instructor Tony McCaul, and Paraprofessional Kayleen Keatley.

For more information, contact Tony McCaul at (616) 738-8950 x4505, amccaul@oaisd.org

Operated by Ottawa Area Intermediate School District, Careerline Tech Center prepares high school juniors and seniors for tomorrow's workforce by providing career and technical education in 24 career areas. CTC serves students from public and private high schools, as well as homeschools, within the following local school districts: Allendale, Coopersville, Grand Haven, Hamilton, Holland, Hudsonville, Jenison, Saugatuck, Spring Lake, West Ottawa, and Zeeland. www.CareerlineTech.org