



Students from the Wilson Area Intermediate School being honored at the Lehigh Valley regional 2020 What's So Cool About Manufacturing? student contest in February 2020. (courtesy photo)

'What's So Cool About Manufacturing?' Contest Returning to Lehigh Valley

By Colin McEvoy

Students from the Wilson Area Intermediate School being honored at the Lehigh Valley regional 2020 What's So Cool About Manufacturing? student contest in February 2020. (courtesy photo)

The annual "What's So Cool About Manufacturing?" student video contest will be returning to the Lehigh Valley for an eighth consecutive year.

Developed by Manufacturers Resource Center, the program is a video-based educational tool that seeks to increase awareness of career paths and technology in manufacturing, and dispel any false perceptions younger generations may have about manufacturing jobs.

This year's awards program will be taped in advance and aired on WFMZ on April 26. Student videos will be available to view from April 7 to April 9 on the program's website, WhatsSoCool.org, and public voting for winners will take place there.

The contest challenges student teams from Lehigh Valley-area middle schools to shoot, edit, and promote short videos that document their experiences with a local manufacturer. The videos will compete regionally for awards in seven different categories.

"The level of support and participation we are seeing, from manufacturers, from our sponsors and from area schools, signifies this program is really heightening community awareness about manufacturing career opportunities," said MRC President & CEO Rich Hobbs.

"The fact that our program can have this level of impact, not just in the Lehigh Valley, but everywhere it is being utilized, is a net positive for the future needs of manufacturing in Pennsylvania," Hobbs said.

The Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation (LVEDC) is once again one of the sponsors of the What's So Cool About Manufacturing? contest this year.

Participating manufacturers this year include B. Braun Medical Inc., Bosch Rexroth Corporation, C. F. Martin & Co., JULABO USA, Just Born Quality Confections, Lutron Electronics Co., Mack Trucks, Nestlé Waters North America, Ocean Spray Cranberries, Inc., Sharp Packaging Solutions, and more.

Twenty schools in Carbon, Lehigh and Northampton counties will participate in this year's contest. The Lehigh Valley contest format, originally created in the Lehigh Valley in 2013, has grown in popularity and has been adopted by groups in 14 other states.

Hobbs described What's So Cool About Manufacturing? as a career awareness program that at its core is "peer marketing," with kids advocating manufacturing to other kids through their videos.

The contest is showcased on the program's website and shared nationally through the Manufacturing Institute and the Manufacturing Extension Partnership platforms. The What's So Cool video library serves as a digital resource showcasing more than 500 Pennsylvania manufacturers.

Dedicated sponsorship by community partners like LVEDC has helped the program continue during the pandemic, Hobbs said. With the impacts of a pandemic affecting many educational programming, WSCM has adapted the program to meet the needs of students, teachers, manufacturers, and school districts.

Additional information can be found on the What's So Cool About Manufacturing? Facebook page at [facebook.com/wscmlv](https://www.facebook.com/wscmlv) and Twitter account at [@wscmlv](https://twitter.com/wscmlv).

Original funding for "What's So Cool About Manufacturing?" was furnished by a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development in 2013.



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