



Contributed photo/Jeff Myers, JSCC

Matt Hardison, a full-time student in the Diesel and Heavy Equipment program, gets some hands-on experience examining the brake system of diesel truck.

# Working to train future technicians

*Diesel and Heavy Equipment students complete first semester at JSCC*

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Staff writer

WARSAW — With its first semester completed, the Diesel and Heavy Equipment technology program is working to help train technicians for the diesel trucking industry.

A ribbon cutting was held recently for the \$1.7 million facility at West Park.

Four years ago, Smithfield Hog Production, formerly Murphy Brown, approached James Sprunt Community College about forming a partnership to train technicians.

The goal was to address the changes in technology and provide a source of ongoing training for current technicians in a state-of-the-art classroom training environment.

To build the facility, JSCC officials received funding from a variety of sources, such as Duplin County (\$519,800); Golden LEAF Foundation (\$1,000,000); Tobacco Trust Foundation, (\$100,000), and other sources.

Jonathan Merritt, instructor for the Diesel and Heavy Equipment Technology program, said there is a diploma, associate's degree and a certificate offered.

Classes started in August with 15 students. One student has since left because of a medical issue.

Students currently enrolled in the diploma program will fin-

ish classes in August of 2017 and graduate in May of 2018.

Merritt said his class is diverse. There are students coming into the program with experience while others have never turned a wrench before.

Once students have completed the program, they will have a good understanding of their position and be knowledgeable enough to start as entry-level technicians in a shop.

Due to the demand for technicians, the students shouldn't have trouble finding employment after graduation.

There is currently a waiting list to enroll in the program.

Overall, Merritt said, the program is going well, with some outfitting being done to the building with various equipment and tools.

The Diesel and Heavy Equipment program has students learning about over-the-road trucks that deliver freight, agriculture equipment and heavy equipment.

In the future, Merritt plans to move into agriculture and heavy equipment as well.

"Right now, our focus is mainly on over-the-road trucks," he said.

In 2018, students will move into the associate degree program.

High school students in the Career and College Promise program

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**—Bob Slaughter, director of fleet maintenance at Smithfield Hog Production**

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in Duplin, Greene and Le-noir county schools are taking a preventive maintenance class. In the spring, students will take a hydraulics class.

Currently, Merritt is the only instructor. He is teaching five different classes and preventive maintenance twice (once for college students and once for high school students.)

In the future, Merritt hopes to hire another instructor part-time.

In the program, students are working on actual trucks instead of engines on stands. Merritt said it helps the students when they begin work-



Photo/Jeff Myers

Students have completed the first semester of the Diesel and Heavy Equipment technology program at James Sprunt Community College.

ing on live trucks.

During the fall semester,

students tore down and re-

built an engine.

One of the benefits of the JSCC program is students have a chance to work “between the tires” instead taking of taking the engine out of the truck and placing it on a stand.

Students are able to work on the truck from any angle in a “live” environment.

For instance, Merritt said, many schools use a brake trainer mounted on a large board.

“We will take them out there and make the actual brake system operate while they are standing under it. They can watch all of the parts move and operate as they do while going down the road.”

He said businesses like

Smithfield Hog Production and TranSource have donated engines to the program to allow students to have a more hands-on experience.

Bob Slaughter, director of fleet maintenance at Smithfield Hog Production, said it has been a real pleasure helping to put the program together and seeing the dedication of JSCC officials.

“It’s overwhelming to see the success already,” said Slaughter. “I look forward to the day not to long from now that we knock some walls out right there and go forward. There is a lot of opportunity out there. The

thing we want to make sure is that it is done right, and we have graduates that leave here knowing which end of the truck is which. I am just proud to be a part of it.”

Matt Hardison, a full-time student in the program, also works full-time at Smithfield Hog Production.

“It is a big plus for us to have the newest thing on the line,” he said. “And now, we will have a better understanding of the electronic system and the way the motor works,” he said.

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