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By Paula Pyzik Scott

My path regularly crosses with that of Apollo Career Center Superintendent Keith Horner when we attend Ada and Bluffton school board meetings. His invitation to visit the facility was a welcome opportunity to see what draws students from 11 different districts who chose an alternative to traditional high school for their junior and senior years.

As a nod to the Icon reader base, I was given the opportunity to meet Lauren Bowers, a welding student from Bluffton, and Ashley Hevlin, a sports exercise science (SES) student from Ada.

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Walking down a locker-lined hallway, through the cafeteria or into an office, Apollo looks much like any other high school. But on closer inspection, students have a uniformly polished and professional appearance in their Apollo gear. And when classroom doors start to open, you find the environments and tools for each area of study.

That means cars on lifts are just a few doors down from a dimly lit computer lab, and a room filled with hospital beds (and mannequins) is around the corner from a carpentry lab filled with the scent of fresh cut lumber.

Bowers warns me that the welding and fabricating lab will be loud and I find her practicing her skills with a hand-held grinder. What has she discovered about Apollo after starting her course of study? “There are

different varieties of opportunities. They open you up to options like going into work and contact with the military, and apprenticeships.” She recalled visiting at 411 Blast, when “I walked into the welding lab and just knew that was where I belonged.” She also attended a welding boot camp at Rhodes Community College for younger students that also helped her test out her interest in the field.

Hevlin is working with other health students in a lab filled with exercise equipment. She was first introduced to opportunities at Apollo by her cousins and took advantage of the sophomore-level career exploration program. “I’m into sports and I’m into exercise, so that’s how I found out SES was for me.” Hevlin points out how collaborative the experience is: “I work with a bunch of different labs. We go to the F.A.S.T. Ohio training facility and work with the senior fire fighters, we get our CPR certifications, we get our CareerSafe (safety and health training) and we get our physical therapy certification.” Her goal is to become an athletic and personal trainer. She continues to participate in volleyball, basketball and track at Ada High School.

Conversations with students and teachers reveal a dynamic atmosphere where students are eager to talk about their courses of study and where the facilities and opportunities are growing. The newest program is Criminal Justice, which Superintendent Horner notes in the latest Apollo newsletter is proving popular among applicants for next year.

There are currently 750 students enrolled at Apollo in 2024-2025. That includes 28 students from Ada and 36 students from Bluffton.

When do students get the opportunity to learn about Apollo? Jamie Buell, admissions coordinator, visits associate schools in November and December and talks about Apollo and admissions. 411 Blast Day is in January, when students sign up for an Apollo field trip. The application period opens December 1 and is currently open online [HERE](#).

On April 10 the facility will hold ApolloPalooza, a campus-wide open house. All buildings and labs are open including adult ed. People will be able to tour the new public safety building as well.

APOLLO PROGRAMS

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NEW Criminal Justice ▪ Career Exploration (Sophomores) ▪ Advanced Manufacturing ▪ Automation and Robotics ▪ Automotive Collision Technology ▪ Automotive Technology ▪ Building and Renovations ▪ Carpentry ▪ Computer Information Support ▪ Construction Equipment Technology | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cosmetology ▪ Culinary Arts ▪ Early Childhood Education ▪ Electrical Systems Technology ▪ Fire/EMS Technology ▪ Health Science (STNA, PCT and PTAC tracks) ▪ HVAC ▪ Multimedia Technology ▪ Print & Graphics ▪ Spa & Esthetics Technology (Seniors) ▪ Sports Exercise Science ▪ Welding & Fabrication |
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Near the end of my tour with administrators, I ask how Apollo has changed since it opened in 1976 and if parents of current students would recognize it as the Apollo of their high school days? “This is not your mom and dad’s vocational education!” is the answer. The facility has more than doubled in size and provides far more programs. It is more high tech and it is more accepted by families.

For more information about Apollo High School and Adult Education opportunities visit <https://www.apollocareercenter.com/>