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## Monroe County sophomores attend Youth Workforce Innovations Conference at RIT

ERNST LAMOTHE JR. • STAFF WRITER • APRIL 3, 2009

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Paul Repka has some interest in microelectronic engineering, a field in which he could design and test electronic devices using microchips.

On the other hand, he thinks finding appealing ways to use energy better could also fit him. The good news is that he has plenty of time to decide between the two choices or even have a dark horse career beat them out.

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"Learning new careers when you are young can help you find out what you want to major in when you go to college," said Paul, 15, of Rush, a 10th-grader at Rush-Henrietta High School. "And finding out early what you don't like to do helps you not waste your time."

More than 120 high school sophomores from various Monroe County school districts attended the third annual Youth Workforce Innovations Conference Thursday at Rochester Institute of Technology.

The program offers students an opportunity to gain first-hand exposure to growing career fields in the Rochester region, such as biotechnology, hospitality, optics and imaging, and

nanotechnology.

Students could choose two fields of interest and attend seminars, slideshows and lectures on the subject.

Nick Watson, 15, of Henrietta is also unsure which areas he found most useful during his half-day at RIT. However, he feels better prepared now than when he woke up Thursday morning.

"There's something comfortable about knowing your options," he said.

Officials speaking at the conference said certain jobs are hot in upstate New York, like those related to alternative energy, where people can identify ways to reduce waste and energy use, or information technology positions where employers are seeking Webmasters, game developers or system analysts.

"Too often a student doesn't get exposed to various careers until senior year and by that time they realize they should have been taking classes over the past two years to get themselves prepared," said Jeff Dillon, coordinator of the School to Business Partnership in the Board of Cooperative Educational Services 1.

"That's why it's important to start programs like this with 10th-graders so they are better prepared to know what they want to do with their lives."

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