

Gold LEAF Tours Local High School's Expansion



Gold LEAF Board and guests take a tour of Mt. Blue High School's expansion.

The new \$64 million Mt. Blue Campus, which houses Mt. Blue High School and the Foster Technology Center in Farmington, was the focal point of a tour given to members of the Gold LEAF Institute from the University of Maine at Farmington on Friday, Jan. 24. The hour and a half walk through ended with a tour of the Chef's Table culinary arts kitchen and a meal prepared by the students. After the meal a short Board meeting, led by Myrna Vallette, was held in the cafe, with Board members and guests in attendance.

What an amazing building! This ground-breaking project was designed to integrate the academic and the career and technology path students and courses and provide the latest in technology and learning features to future generations. The tour was led by Foster Tech Director Glen Kapiloff, whose pride in his school showed as he took us to many classrooms, labs, a new gym with a public address system that exceeds the clarity of the Cumberland Civic Center, a 500-seat auditorium and a smaller 150-seat venue.

The RSU 9 School serves the towns of Farmington, Industry, New Sharon, New Vineyard, Temple, Vienna, Weld and Wilton. Students from as far away as Mt. Abram are brought down for tech school classes. Students were seen in classrooms, studying or quietly talking in reserved open spaces in hallways, reading in the spacious library, working on their laptops or eating in the inviting and sun-lit food court. Teachers teach in quiet, well-lit rooms equipped with the latest technology, all very conducive to learning.

It was beyond what many Gold LEAF members could have imagined, many said repeatedly throughout the tour. Kapiloff emphasized that students have opportunities to

take courses with direct applications for careers, research, and advanced study and they have access to the technology and equipment being used today in the field. And the design of the school has placed academic classrooms right beside programs with related career and technology curriculum, such as science classrooms across the hall from pre-engineering and forestry.

Among the stops we made: in the biotechnology program, we met students learning about biological systems and living organisms, from viruses and bacteria to DNA, to make products that benefit human beings. A computer technology class was learning how to construct small drones. A science class had assembled a 3-D printer from a kit. The digital media program offers a fully equipped sound and video studio; early childhood has programs where students work with families of pre-school and infant children; and culinary arts offers training for careers in the food service industry and students operate a full service restaurant. Gold LEAF members also toured the firefighting program, the first in the state, which offers a certification program for young men and women to become firefighters; automotive technology; digital media; business education; and commercial arts.

And upcoming this year will be the relocation of the Franklin County Adult Education program into space at the Mt. Blue Campus, making the school a true school for the whole community.

submitted by – Betty Jespersen, Gold LEAF