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## Students told to master skills now in demand

Hillary Gavan

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Hillary Gavan/Beloit Daily News Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker spoke at "Dare to Dream: A Discussion of Innovation Center. The event featured Mike Rowe, former host of "Dirty Jobs."

BELOIT - While hosting the TV show "Dirty Jobs," Mike Rowe said he was struck by the fact that success didn't look like what he thought it would. For example, the show profiled at least 50 millionaires.



"It didn't feature people who were desperate or victims, but people who mastered skills in demand and used it to prosper. The people did it with good humor, skill and modesty," Rowe said.

Executive producer, TV host, and podcaster Rowe encouraged students to challenge their assumptions about certain careers at a free event titled "Dare to Dream: A Discussion of Hard Work and Innovation" at the Eclipse Center on Thursday evening. The free event, held for Beloit area students, featured information on careers in the skilled trades.

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Hendricks CareerTek, the Hendricks Family Foundation and Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce (WMC) hosted the event which included dinner. It opened with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Mark Finnegan of VetsRoll and veteran and Pearl Harbor attack survivor Stan Van Hoose.

In addition to Rowe, the discussion also included remarks from Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce (WMC) President Kurt Bauer, Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker, local business leader Diane Hendricks and CareerTek Business Education Director Tina Salzman.

Rowe told students the skills gap is a symptom of a larger dysfunctional relationship with work. The country, he said, has a very specific idea what a good job and education looks like in 2017. He said a traditional four-year college degree has been pushed ahead of other forms of training which can lead to good paying and fulfilling jobs. Rowe noted 77 percent of jobs don't require a four year degree, but instead require training.

Rowe, who Bauer described as part philosopher and evangelist, challenged the ideas kids get taught about work and life.

He cautioned students against phrases telling people to follow their passion. Although Rowe said passion is great, it shouldn't be the thing that ultimately motivates all the decisions one makes.

Just because one loves something doesn't mean that person won't stink at it. He cited all the people who try out for American Idol and fail as an example. Passion, although good, can also blind one from other opportunities for which one is better suited.

"Let opportunity, not passion guide you in your quest for vocational satisfaction," Rowe said.

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Today, vocational decisions, and even relationship choices, increasingly seem to focus on passion giving people sometimes unrealistic expectations. Just as people may spend a lifetime seeking the perfect soulmate with little results, they may keep job hopping until they get more realistic.

Unfortunately, Rowe said the country has "waged a cold war on the traditional notions of work and education." He cited TV shows' negative portrayals of plumbers as one example.

Rowe spoke out against the old adage of working smart and not hard, but encouraged students to work both smart and hard. He noted the jobs of today and tomorrow aren't white or blue collar, but gray collar with a variety of new skills coupled with old-fashioned hard work.

Rowe also encouraged students to develop their soft skills, dressing appropriately and being able to take the temperature of a room. Although some people in society seem to do bad things and get rewarded, Rowe said curiosity, a good attitude and a

strong work ethic will always pay off in the long run.

Walker said his grandfather worked in manufacturing for more than four decades supporting his family. However, Walker said manufacturing has changed. Today, more computer science is required as well as the ability to operate multiple machines. Learning skills to work in manufacturing can lead to a promising future.

Walker said working in a trade not only pays well, but also includes good benefits as well as fulfillment as manufacturing has less turnover than many other occupations.

Hendricks said having almost 300 people, mostly students, looking at their future in a different lens, was the most exciting group she's had at the Eclipse Center.

She told students that everyone has a different journey to happiness and success. She noted she knew of truck drivers in her company who climbed the ladder to become millionaires as well as others happy in good paying jobs in warehouse work, administrative support, sales or what some would consider "dirty jobs." She also encouraged students with aspirations requiring higher education to pursue it. She said students can reach whatever goals they set their mind to.

Thursday's crowd included students from Beloit Memorial High School, Beloit Turner and South Beloit High School. Football team members from South Beloit High School were seen in the crowd wearing their red jerseys.

"We thought it would be a good way to show our school's character," said South Beloit team member Brandon Walker, who said he hopes to become a carpenter.