Grad aims to take manufacturing, engineering by storm with help from Chamber scholarship

It's never a waste of time to develop your passions; they could give you a clear idea of your own path ahead.

This has always been a front-of-mind idea for St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic High School student John Szewczyk. Now, as he prepares to embark on his post-secondary education at the University of Ottawa to study engineering, he's doing so with a firm focus on manufacturing.

Manufacturing is an area that sometimes takes a back seat to design, he says, but that certainly isn't the perspective of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce and sponsor Bunn-o-matic, which recently came together to present John with their annual Manufacturing Scholarship of $5,000.

?My teacher told me about the [scholarship] as I had been doing competitions and stuff for the school including the robotics team and we also did a coding competition. Because she knows I enjoy that field?she said I should apply,? says John. ?I'm going to be studying electrical engineering, so I learned about machining, how to operate a CNC, and I learned a lot about manufacturing just through doing and I kind of built a passion for it.

?My end goal is to get into chip design, so someone like AMD or IBM, designing chips for them, whether it be graphics, or components and CPUs, more with computer electronics.?

Expanding on the idea that some people might be more focused on the design of a product rather than its manufacture, he says ?more people care about the end product rather than the process it takes to actually make the chip.?

?No one will care that it required all these machines and all these separate processes to make sure the chip was effective, would work properly, or be up to spec,? he says. ?Most people would care ?an engineer at AMD designed this' and not ?an engineer at AMD made sure this could be made 1,000 times for this customer in this state.' More is put into the end product and not into the manufacturing process that was required to [be undertaken] to actually make it happen.?

He's not sure what can be done immediately to ignite interest in the other direction amongst the designers and manufacturers of tomorrow, but one suggestion he has is to encourage schools to take their students on tours of facilities that interest them, showing how a product is made from start to finish.

A simple step, he contends, is a bit of advice he'd like to pass on to students who are just a month-and-a-half away from starting their high school journeys: ?Focus on the academics, but also focus on your passions and developing them.?

?I find a lot of people will focus so much on academics, but going to university, they have no idea what they want to do, so they just go and get a general degree, and that's great, but it would be even better if you know what your degree [will] be in,? he says. ?Maybe in general, instead of Grade 8 where it's a focus on ?I need to be studying every day, all day in Grade 9' to do whatever, it should focus on, ?Maybe I should do some extracurriculars and figure out what I like doing.' Maybe it's some volunteering [at a place tied into your interests].

?There should be more focus on this industry. There's a lot of potential in manufacturing and I feel a lot of it is [overshadowed] because people care about the engineering and more the business side of it; I really care about the actual manufacturing process. I feel like we're going to see a lot of change in manufacturing just because of AI and all the different models they have now and I think a lot more people should be more interested in manufacturing.?

By Brock Weir