While some students skip college, trade programs are booming

By OLIVIA SANCHEZ

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — It’s almost 4 p.m. at the Nashville branch of the Tennessee College of Applied Technology, and the students in the auto night repair class are just starting their school day.

One is standing in the shade outside the shop of his 1989 Ford F-350. Another is patiently hammering out hitches on a trailer. A third, Chevan Jones, is taking a break from working on his 2001 Lexus IS 300 to chat with some classmates.

While almost every sector of higher education has fewer students registering for classes, many trade programs are thriving. Jones and his classmates, seeking certificates and other short-term credentials, are among those who are choosing trade school over a traditional four-year degree.

Tennessee College of Applied Technology Nashville student Avery Colburn poses during welding class Wednesday, April 13, 2023, in Nashville, Tenn. While almost every sector of higher education is seeing fewer students registering for classes, many trade school programs are booming with young people who are choosing trade school over a traditional four-year degree.

At TCAT Nashville, several programs have waiting lists, and the college has added night classes to meet demand, said Nathan Garrett, president of the college.

TCAT focuses on training students for jobs that are in demand in the region, which appeals to many students in normal times, but Garrett said the pandemic may have underscored the need for workforce relevance.

“When we look at ‘essential workers,’ a lot of those trades never saw a slowdown,” he said. “They still hired. They still have the need.” Automotive trades are always in demand, he added.

Even so, Jones’ pursuit of a degree at TCAT Nashville would perhaps be a surprise to his high school self. “I didn’t necessarily know what I wanted to do,” said Jones, now 26. “My biggest fear was to go to college, put in all that time and effort and then not use my degree.”

So, at 18, Jones went to work in warehouses, spending long days loading and unloading heavy boxes from tractor-trailers. But after just a few years, he realized he needed a job that would make him happier, cause fewer injuries and pay him more. Trade school for a career fixing cars seemed like the best route.

Robert Nyiriyo’s story became clear a bit earlier in his education, when he realized he didn’t like high school. He spent most of his free time watching YouTube videos about fixing up cars before he was ever licensed to drive.

Training in auto repair made sense for him, he said, because he could earn a credential while doing what he enjoyed, and without spending much time in the traditional classroom. Now 19, he says he’ll be the “biggest competitor” this year.

The test flight was called off just over eight minutes into the countdown because of a stuck valve, but for practice, took the clock’s second hand past the 11 o’clock point without reaching the 12 o’clock mark before halting the countdown.

The Hechinger Report

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No people or satellites were aboard. There won’t be another try until at least Wednesday.

“Learned a lot today,” Musk tweeted after the flight was postponed.

The company plans to use Starship to send people and cargo to the moon and, ultimately, Mars.

On the eve of the launch attempt, cars, campers, RVs and even bicycles and horses jammed the only road leading to the launch pad, where the stainless steel rocket towered above the flat scrubland and prairie.

Enthusiasts posed in front of the giant letters that spelled out Starship at the entrance of the SpaceX complex, and in front of the rocket two days later.

By JON BAKER

PAWUCKET — As Davey Tech senior Christian Pires sat in The Verbeulatorium the night of Tuesday, April 4, she couldn’t stop wondering if she had done all she could this far. And during the SkillsUSA R.I. Competition in the Health Occupations Professional Portfolio category, she thought maybe I could have done more, she said.

Minutes later, she and hundreds of other competitors looked up at the big screen above the stage during this — the state SkillsUSA awards ceremony — Pires discovered she had captured the gold medal.

Pires was also named the top qualifier for the SkillsUSA National Championships in Atlanta, Ga., between June 18-24.

She’s extremely proud of myself, but I also felt like I wanted to cry a little.

Boston Marathon Race Director Dave McGillivray sends out a group of about 20 from the Massachusetts National Guard, which walks the course annually, announcing the start of the 127th marathon Monday.

By MARCIA DUNN

SOUTH PADRE ISLAND, Texas (AP) — SpaceX called off the first launch attempt of a giant rocket Monday after a problem cropped up during fueling.

Elon Musk’s company had planned to fly the nearly 400-foot Starship rocket from the southern tip of Texas, near the Mexican border.

The test flight was called off just over eight minutes into the countdown because of a stuck valve needed to pressure the first-stage booster. Launch controllers couldn’t fix the frozen valve in time, but for practice, took the clock’s second hand past the 11 o’clock point before halting the countdown.

The Times

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AP Photo/John Amis

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AP Photo/John Amis
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