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Student Records Foundry Techniques

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By T.W. Burger of the Carlisle Bureau



Carlisle High School senior Jimmy Craine is shooting, producing, and editing a training video showing the no-bake mold process at the Frog, Switch & Manufacturing Co. in Carlisle. The foundry makes manganese steel wear parts for the mining, aggregate and shredder industries. Craine, at far right above, stands beside process engineer Jeff Kauffman during taping.

Photograph by Dan Gleiter

CARLISLE - The Frog, Switch & Manufacturing Co. is about fire and steel and history.

Now, with a little help from Carlisle High School, some of Frog, Switch's manufacturing secrets won't become history.

For his senior project, Jimmy Craine, 17, has been video-recording some of the mold-making techniques at the 126-year-old firm.

"Some of the molds we might make once every several years, so it's good to have those processes stored on some kind of permanent media that will outlast people's memories," said Warren Bieger, company CEO.

It was Craine's first time seeing heavy industry up close, but he is no stranger to video equipment.

"I've been working with this stuff for three years," he said. "I got into it in the ninth grade in my church and started taking classes in 11th grade."

Craine intends to head for a two-year broadcasting program at a technical school after graduation.

Frog, Switch employees work with molds filled with steel heated to nearly 3,000 degrees. Craine was required to stand too far from the hot stuff to derive any benefit from it in the clanging chill of the foundry.

"It's cold," he said, his hands jammed into the pockets of his hoodie as he peered at the camera's viewscreen through safety goggles. "I was shocked when I came in there the first time. I live here in Carlisle, but I never knew how big this place was."

He already knows that standing in the clamor, dust and smoke of the steel foundry is the easiest part of

the job. After the recording will come hours of doing narration and editing.

Jeff Kauffman, a process engineer who has been with Frog, Switch for 33 years, said some of the techniques used at Frog, Switch have been around for decades but have never been written down and, in any case, can be hard to describe in words.

"We want to be sure these things get passed on, and we want to show new people what they're getting into and what to watch out for, so nobody gets hurt," he said.

William Stoms, Craine's broadcasting teacher, said blending the availability of video technology with the needs of a company like Frog, Switch presents a great opportunity for both the community and students.

"This is an example of how the school district can help and be involved with the community. It allows the students to get out and have a real-life experience," he said.

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COMPANY DETAILS

The Frog, Switch & Manufacturing Co.:

Location: 600 E. High St., Carlisle.

History: Founded in 1881. Originally made steel parts for rail cars and later railroad track. A "frog" is a special section of rail that allows a train to cross over or switch tracks. The company now makes hardened steel parts for crushing rock, and shredders that can chew a junked auto into rubble in moments.