

My Turn

By Dennis Franks

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Two staff members are proving that learning never stops as they take part in the BIG program offered by the Chillicothe Ross Chamber of Commerce.

Shara Cochenour, high school principal, and Julie Bolen, Adult Education program manager, are members of the 2013-14 BIG class.



Shara Cochenour, left, and Julie Bowen, visited YSK this week as part of the BIG program.

The Business, Industry and Government program, in its second year, meets one day a month for nine months and participants tour businesses in Ross County, such as Adena Health System, Glatfelter, Kenworth Truck Company, InfoSight and the YSK Corp. In addition to a day-trip to Columbus that includes a tour of the Statehouse and a visit with local legislators, class members meet with the mayor of Chillicothe and a county commissioner to discuss economic development.

Shara, who has lived in Pickaway and Ross counties her entire life, said the class gave her an opportunity to visit Kenworth and InfoSight for the first time. Kenworth's Scott Blue and InfoSight's John Robertson discussed their backgrounds and provided leadership strategies.

Last month, the class visited the Statehouse, meeting with Sen. Bob Peterson and Rep. Gary Scherer. The legislators answered questions ranging from education to taxes.

Shara and Julie have appreciated the opportunity to network with Ross County businesspeople and learn about companies in Pickaway-Ross' own back yard.

"The program is providing us with personal and professional experiences we might not otherwise get," Shara said.

"The BIG program has been a great networking opportunity," Julie said. "It has also been beneficial to tour some of the local manufacturer's facilities. These are places where our students are getting jobs. It's helpful for me to see what they are doing and see some of the current training needs in our area."

Julie said the connections she's making in industry can benefit Adult Education's advisory committees, job shadowing and internship opportunities.

"It is important that I take back to our students and programs what local industry is looking for in hiring new employees," she said.

