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## **Question of the Month: How can partnerships help the next generation understand the world of business and what we are passionate about? - by Chris Edge**

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Chris Edge, Town of Berlin

As resources become scarce from both the state and federal level, we all need to look at ways to partner with others to make great things happen. This is the case in Berlin, Connecticut this past year and into 2018. Berlin is a community located in the geographic center of Connecticut, near all major state highways and interstates and is just over 2 hours to Fenway Park and 3 hours to the Empire State Building. Made up of firms of many types, we have seen tremendous growth in aerospace and medical device manufacturing, distribution/wholesale as well as business and personal services.

The best example of how we collaborate is our relationship with Junior Achievement of Southwest New England. Starting in November 2017 and going into May of this year, we are bringing businesses into Berlin High School in order to educate 9th and 10th graders on the business world through hearing directly from business leaders in Berlin.

On March 14th, we will have over 15 business owners and entrepreneurs speaking about personal branding. Personal branding seems to be a strange thing for high school students, but personal branding highlights what an individual is known for, what people seek that individual out for and what that individual wants to be known for. Future employers will look at what brand an individual has built for yourselves when deciding whom to employ – what impression will future employers have of that individual based on their social media presence?

On March 21st, we will be holding a panel discussion which will include 4 to 5 professionals in Berlin from various industries. They will be answering questions from a moderator as well as a few questions from students. This will allow students to hear about success stories from individuals in Berlin including entrepreneurs to 2nd generation business owners who call Berlin home.

In late April/early May, we will be partnering with a handful of firms in order to do visitations for Berlin High students. These visitations will be at a number of different types of industries, with various employment opportunities. The goal is for each business to highlight the work they do as well as inform students about the great career options right here in Berlin. Even though some of the news

from Hartford is gloom and doom, individuals, regardless of age, can find a career path in Berlin, many times in firms that you did not even know existed.

On May 16th, we will again have professionals speak to 9th graders on resume writing. Junior Achievement studies show that less than 40% of high school students have a resume or know how to create one. This day will help students to not only create a resume, but highlight their work experience including great accomplishment at each job and how they stand out from the “crowd”

The key to partnerships is to get people and businesses behind an effort. No matter who you are, or what you do to make a living, I believe that when challenges in your professional or personal life confront you, look for ways to partner with other people, organizations and businesses.

I have found that many individuals in the development and construction industries are looking to help each other, especially individuals who are up and coming, even in high school. Experiences are to be shared as is expertise. Don't be afraid to tell your story – you might just inspire someone !

Chris Edge is the director of economic development for the Town of Berlin, Conn.

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