

# Hands-On

## Students Get Close-up Look at Corps' Construction Site

It's one thing to read about engineering in a text book – but putting on a hard hat and exploring a construction site brought engineering to life for some Savannah-area students.

A group of 13 Jenkins High School students visited Hunter Army Airfield Aug. 7, as part of a week-long summer camp focused on engineering and technology. The visit, hosted by the Savannah District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, encouraged students to pursue high-demand careers in engineering. It also gave students an introduction to engineering fields within the Army, whether as a Soldier or a Civilian.

"We've spent a week in camp, with the students exploring various opportunities in engineering," said Grace Herrington, director of the Jenkins Engineering School. "This is a full-scale operation, where they get to see lots of different types of engineering coming together to construct facilities."

The group toured a Corps' construction site for a \$13.4 million barracks project. Here, they learned about the properties of concrete and steel, and they were able to see how the planning and design phases come together during construction.

"I've always been into science and math, but it's been a toss up for me between going into the medical field or an engineering field," said Sean Taylor, a Jenkins High senior. "This trip has opened my eyes to a lot of other career possibilities ... I think it's neat seeing how engineers do plans and study the groundwork, and they turn that into something new, like a building."

Other Savannah District team members, including the District Commander, Col. Ed Kertis, shared their expertise in a range of fields.

"If you're happy with what you're doing, you'll never work a day in your life," Kertis told the students. As an avid outdoors enthusiast and biologist, Kertis emphasized many exciting opportunities in the field of engineering, from hydroelectric dams and harbor dredging to environmental research or military construction.

Geologist Zsolt Haverland talked with the students about the basics of geology and how it affects the construction site, while Grant Clark, a geotechnical engineer, explained the importance of studying soil samples to ensure a better foundation design. Architect Marion Harrison presented various architectural drawings and discussed the architect's role.

Officers from the 224th Military Intelligence Battalion escorted Corps instructors and Jenkins High School students to a C12-N common sensor aircraft at Hunter Army Airfield.





Grant Clark, civil engineer, discusses geotechnical and civil engineering with students from Jenkins High School. *Photo by Tracy Robillard.*

Engineer Jim Gatling shared some mechanical and electrical engineering drawings, while Susan Brinson, civil engineer, discussed the importance of sustainable, “green” design.

“The Army owns a lot of buildings, so if we can reduce our energy consumption in our buildings, we can do a lot to help our environment, our Soldiers and our nation,” Brinson said.

Hunter Army Airfield Resident Engineer Troy Funk, along with project engineers Joshua Stuckey and Michael Bringman, guided the group through the barracks site while giving a description of the Corps’ role in the construction phase.

Even the construction company for the barracks project engaged the students. Rick Greene, safety manager for Sauer, Inc., talked about job safety and encouraged the students to get involved in the many facets of the construction industry.

“Don’t think of construction as just someone with a hammer in their hand,” he said. “There’s a lot more to it than what you actually see on the site.”

The students also visited an airplane hangar, where Maj. Richard Melnyk and Warrant Officer Timothy Burke helped them climb inside a C12-N common sensor aircraft. The plane belonged to the 224th Military Intelligence Battalion.

At the end of the day, students took home an array of knowledge about the Corps of Engineers and its military construction program. Perhaps some of these students will one day join the Corps team, where they will continue “Building Strong” for the next generation of Soldiers.

“I’ve heard of the Corps of Engineers before, but I didn’t know they had as many Civilians as they do. I thought it was mostly ‘green suits,’” said Luke Randall, a junior at Jenkins High School. “I think working with the Corps would be a good job to have, and it would be a good fit for me.”

The field trip required lots of planning and coordination from Nadeem Raza of the Savannah District’s construction division. As a recent graduate of the South Atlantic Division’s 2009 Leadership Development Program, Raza lead the effort from start to finish.

“Col. Kertis and Ralph Barrett, Chief of engineering division, chose me to execute this event as part of the district’s involvement with the LDP,” Raza said. “Since I used to work in the engineering division, I have experience in both the design phase and construction, and I wanted to tie those fields together to give the kids a wholesome experience.”

Raza thanks the Savannah District team for coming together to invest in the education of local youth, including Forpu Njikam from the engineering division for escorting the students around the installation.

“It required teamwork from everyone involved, and we all contributed to make the trip a success,” Raza said. “The school was very pleased and has asked us to come back again. It’s such an accomplishment to motivate students – it’s worth every penny.” 🇺🇸

*By Tracy Robillard, Staff Writer*