**WHY Manufacturing Careers?** – Hope Riska, Productivity Inc

That's the question I not only get asked, but also what I ask students AND parents.  Why NOT? It's not your Grandfather's Machine Shop anymore!  Did you know most manufacturing companies are so clean you could (nearly) eat off the floor?  With Minnesota and the Midwest being predominantly Medical Device manufacturing, every day we have an opportunity to make a difference in so many aspects of our daily lives.  Sure, there are some really cool medical devices like pacemakers, bone screws, etc., but what about things we use all of the time – simple as your toothbrush, eyeglasses, electronics, food packaging and more!

Have you ever asked your kids, "What do you LOVE to do? What is your passion? Do you like to work with your hands? Your mind? If there is one thing you could FIX in this world, what would it be and how would you do it?"  Too often we don't think about what our kids want to do, but rather what do WE think they would enjoy or should do?

Do you know what companies are in your own back yard?  Think about it. How many times have you driven past the company around the corner and wondered, "what do they do there?" Did you know that we have ALL of these wonderful resource tools – internet, phones and even non-electronic devices like our hands to find out – knock on the door and ask, "what do you do here?" Make a field trip out of it with your kids to check it out!

Do you work for a manufacturing company or in the industry? Have you shared what you do with your kids?  I don't mean the High School kids, but the younger ones…middle school or younger…if you enjoy what you do, SHOW IT!  Too often we don't even think about doing our own "Show and Tell" so our own career pathways get lost in translation – too many kids are being told, "college is a 4-year degree" – but COLLEGE can be a Certificate OR a Diploma, a 2-year Degree OR a 4-year Degree.

Here's a few facts:  For 2-year Degree (Tech College) graduates, average starting salary for a CNC Machinist in Minneapolis-St. Paul area is $47,632; average salary for a CNC Programmer (again, 2-year Tech College degree) is $58,000.

Average annual COST for Community and Technical 2-year degree program is $3,347/year, compared to the average cost of a 4-year program at $9,139/year.

Many companies will help pay for their education, and most students have a job lined up before they even graduate from their 2-year program.

With the way the country and society are these days, it's up to US to help guide the way…don't leave it up to others to shape the future of our kids (or anything for that matter).  I once heard a wise person say, "If it is to BE, it is up to ME!"  Actually…it's up to us all!  What are YOU waiting for?