

# Trying to get a message heard

Manufacturers seek to dispel negative perception of industry

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Tribune reporter

Alex Stewart's eyes widened as the human-size steel spool unwound and fed the nail-making machine.

Later, as he watched

the nails being sorted, coated with a red liquid, then taped and packaged by a machine, Stewart said he was fascinated by the automation. Only a few workers were needed and machines did all the work.

"Very cool," the 16-

year-old said.

Stewart was among 10 high school students who visited seven manufacturers in Evanston on Wednesday. The companies showcased their operations to the teens as well as community leaders and politicians, hoping to dispel perceptions that making things is dirty and dangerous work and that manufacturing is

either dead or dying. The event was part of a series of open house events taking place this week across the nation to bolster careers in manufacturing and the industry's value to the U.S. economy.

For decades manufacturers have complained that younger workers lack necessary job skills.

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