

Fast Track to Success

EDUCATORS BRAKE TO ADMIRE NASCAR CARS AND THE PATRIOT CHOPPER

Story and photos by Scott J. Farrell

AT A TIME WHEN nearly a third of the fastest growing occupations require an advanced degree or certificate, getting the right education is more important than ever. Formerly known as vocational education, career and technical education (CTE) puts students on the path to post-secondary education and careers.

Founded in 1926, the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) is the largest national education association dedicated to the advancement of education that prepares youth and adults for successful careers. The organization has more than 28,000 members, including school administrators, guidance counselors and CTE teachers.

Each year, ACTE holds a convention and career tech expo, the premiere professional development event for career and technical educators. In 2008, it was held in Charlotte, NC, with more than 4,000 school, career and technical education professionals from across the country attending.

Educators at the convention attended numerous professional development workshops designed to help them return to school with fresh ideas and renewed energy. Conference exhibitors offered attendees the latest information on products and curricula available for CTE educators.

With approximately 75 percent of the NASCAR industry's employees and drivers based within two hours of downtown Charlotte, the convention had a racing theme and was in a prime location for the Army National Guard (ARNG) to showcase its cars and motorcycle.

The ARNG's display of the No. 88 NASCAR vehicle, driven by Dale Earnhardt Jr., and the No. 4 Indy car, driven by Dan Wheldon, was a hit. Along with the Patriot Chopper, these vehicles created a buzz, and educators stood in line to get their picture taken with the cars and the motorcycle. When it was explained to educators that they



SHOWSTOPPER ACTE convention attendees visit the ARNG booth, where the No. 88 NASCAR drew a big crowd.

Dale Jr.'s No. 88 car and Dan Wheldon's No. 4 Indy car were two of the Guard's vehicles on display.

could request a vehicle like this to be brought to their school, based on availability, they could not sign up fast enough. By the end of the convention, there were more than 300 requests for ARNG vehicles to be brought to schools.

Convention attendees also learned about the career mentor database available through the Partners in Education Web site. Educators and students can use the database to learn more about the diverse civilian occupations held by members of the ARNG by calling on local ARNG members registered in the database to share their career stories.

The event was a major success and increased awareness of the ARNG as a valuable partner for the CTE community; more than 600 educators visited the Partners in Education booth to learn more about ARNG school programs. In fact, ACTE has offered the ARNG additional space to display a helicopter and Humvee at next year's convention in Nashville, TN.

"The National Guard understands that attendees always look for interactive and exciting displays, and they set up one of the best and most fun displays I have ever seen at an ACTE career tech expo," said James Waterhouse, ACTE's Sales & Exhibits Manager. "The National Guard gave our attendees a wonderful, exciting and interactive experience." **GX**



RED, CHROME & BLUE Educators at the ACTE convention in Charlotte, NC, check out the Patriot Chopper motorcycle.

While signing up to bring the vehicles to their schools, educators were also informed about the ARNG Partners In Education program, which connects schools, teachers and students with free ARNG educational resources, from classroom presentations to programs for at-risk youth.

The Partners in Education classroom presentation is just one of the many resources the ARNG has to offer. This two-part presentation uses dynamic slides, videos, discussion points and handouts to help prepare students for life after high school.

For more information about the Partners in Education program or to sign up to be a career mentor, visit PartnersInEducation.com.