Chase Dahmer is a junior at Sheboygan North High School, but he has already participated in three co-op placements with local businesses in an attempt to help him identify an eventual career path. Dahmer had a general interest in working in Manufacturing, so his first co-op experience took place last spring at Rockline Industries. “I learned how paper filters and wet wipes were made and all the maintenance behind it. There’s a lot of stuff involved,” he said. “I’m a fan of maintenance and working on the machines. This co-op—and most co-ops—are just a general overview of the company. So you get to learn everything…every day is different.”

His experience at Rockline helped him determine that an engineering career path which he had previously considered—and one in which he had taken some preliminary classes at North High—wasn’t right for him. “After sitting down with the engineers at Rockline, and seeing what they do, I kind of found out that wasn’t going to be a job for me. It’s something I’m not interested in, just because it’s something where you’re sitting in an office all day. I’m not a fan of that environment. I like to be hands on and keep moving,” he said. “It kind of showed me what I didn’t want to do, so I thought I’d go to some other companies to see if there was something I do want to do.”
So Dahmer applied for another co-op which took him to Bemis Manufacturing. There he found an area that proved intriguing. “My favorite part was when I was in Maintenance and Millwrights working with everything that was metal…everything from the machines to stands to chairs and crawl spaces and catwalks and all the stuff that is around the machines and the robots…they make everything. That was pretty cool. I liked the variety, so that may be a possible future opportunity for me,” he said.

But Dahmer also has an interest and appreciation for cars, so recently he started a co-op placement with Van Horn Automotive Group. “This year I took an Autos Class…I took this co-op because of my interest in cars,” Dahmer said. He’s hoping to learn about fixing cars, both inside and out, and perhaps even delving into the sales end of the business.

Co-op placements typically take place over a quarter of the school year, and students both take classes and work. “After my first co-op the people at Rockline were really nice and supportive and I just wanted to continue in co-ops because I really don’t know what I want to do,” Dahmer said. “It’s a good opportunity for me to figure out for sure what I wanted to do.” He doesn’t plan on stopping with the Van Horn co-op. Students can participate in up to four co-ops during the school year, and a fifth during summer, and Dahmer plans on taking full advantage of the co-op program. He has an interest in engines and might look into participating in an engine-related co-op. In his senior year, he hopes to become involved in the Youth Apprenticeship program. “That’s my plan. This year I want to kind of figure out what I want to do, and what companies I’m interested in and then next year I’d like to continue in the Youth Apprenticeship program and spend more time in one area,” Dahmer said.

Dahmer said that the co-op program is a win-win situation. “It’s really like a job shadow with hands-on experience and you get paid for it and credit for it,” he explained, noting that his current schedule involves taking five classes in the morning, using his lunch hour to drive to his workplace and spending two hours at work.

The co-op program is a win-win situation. It’s really like a job shadow with hands-on experience and you get paid for it and credit for it. I highly recommend it.”

Chase Dahmer
Sheboygan North

Dahmer is so taken with the co-op program he has been named the Co-op Ambassador at North, sharing his experiences with other students at the school. He has even helped convince some students to participate in the co-op program. As far as he is concerned the co-op program is the way to go. “You get prepared for your future and you get paid! I highly recommend it,” he said.

To learn more about Inspire Sheboygan County and the programs they offer, visit:

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Story contributed by Ann Pirrung-Grote