On behalf of Bridge Valley Community Technical College and Toyota Motor Manufacturing WV, I am pleased to speak to all this evening. I would like to thank Todd, from NASA, for inviting me to speak and share my story.

I graduated top of my class from Wayne High School in 2016, and I’m currently attending Bridge Valley Community Technical College as an Advanced Manufacturing Technology Major. I also work at Toyota Motor Manufacturing West Virginia three days a week.

In robotics education, students have the ability to solve complex problems while building the robot and when programming. Trust me, it is not as easy as it looks. Students learn to overcome the game while learning what will be needed from them in our future workforce. Whether the student is going to be a medical doctor, engineer, lawyer, teacher, or a business professional, robotics education helps every learner. On a robotics team we need someone who can argue why their robot is better equip for the competition than other robots. There needs to be people who can think of ideas and put them into motion. When a robot breaks down, there has to be someone there to fix it. Whenever it comes time to show-off the robot, someone must have the job of documenting the team’s progression through an engineering notebook. As you can see, robotics education can be applied to just about every career choice!

Ever since I was a kid, I loved to work with my hands. Whether it was in the wood shop with my grandpa or at Marshall University with the First Lego League (FLL). In other words, I have been working towards my career since I was in third grade. I believe there needs to be more emphasis on STEM related fields such as robotics, because it keeps young kids engaged in learning. I mean, you can teach kids fractions all day long. However, there is nothing more interesting than showing them ratios or illustrating how fractions are used in the real world by building a gear assembly.

Once I got a little older, I was able to join the high school robotics team while in middle school. I really thought I stepped up in the world when we started to build robots out of metal, rather than little plastic parts. This was the same year our FIRST Tech Challenge Team made it to the First Tech Challenge World Championship in St. Louis, MO. Once students get the opportunity to compete and have a chance to go to the world competition, they are able to speak to people from around the world. However, there will be some teams there that do not speak the English language, so game strategy and basic communication can become interesting!

While being on the high school robotics team, I began to excel at what I did. I was able to learn all aspects of team’s jobs by writing in the engineering notebook, creating AutoCAD (Computer-Aided Design) drawings, building different parts of the robot, and learning how to speak in front of people. I took Project Lead the Way classes at my high school such as, Introduction to Engineering, Principles of Engineering, Civil Engineering and Architecture, and Digital Electronics. In combination with these basic skills and engineering classes, I was able to narrow my career and education choice down to a two-year technical degree for now.

Within my senior year of high school, I had to make decisions regarding where I would be going to school and possibly where I would be working. My Project Lead the Way teacher and robotics mentor, told me about the Advanced Manufacturing Program (AMT) that Toyota Motor Manufacturing West Virginia in Buffalo, WV sponsors. Students have the potential to make 40,000 dollars while in the AMT program and 60,000 a year without overtime once hired by Toyota. I applied to Bridge Valley and went for a job interview at Toyota in January of my senior year. In late March, I got word that I was a selected candidate for the program. I accepted the offer to work three days and I would go to school the other two days of the week. After the AMT program I plan on attending Marshall University’s Mechanical Engineering program once it is accredited. There is nothing better than getting paid good wages while going to school.

Since I started attending Bridge Valley, I was able to start a Vex University Robotics Team with the help of the school’s outreach coordinator. We have already competed this year in Maryland, where we beat out half of the competition. We intend on coming to Fairmont State University in early March to compete.

Because of the plastic Lego robotic kit, because of Project Lead the Way engineering courses in high school, because of robotics teams I’ve been a part of, I stand in front of you today. I speak on behalf of the next generation of hard working men and women of West Virginia that need your support in the education system to make programs like I have described a reality in elementary, middle, and high schools across the state.

Thank You