

'Energy Industry 101' offered to high school students

By MJ Clark

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RIVERTON – Fremont County high school students have the opportunity to learn about and experience careers in the energy industry thanks to an innovative partnership between industry and education.

Fremont County Board of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES) has joined with EnCana Oil and Gas, U.S. Energy and Devon Energy Corp. to offer an Energy Exploration high school curriculum. EnCana kicked off the effort last fall with a grant of \$113,800 to fund the new program. Devon contributed \$25,000 for the coming year, \$5,000 for personal protective gear for the students, and will provide visiting instructors and company trainers to work with the students.

The Energy Exploration curriculum started this past spring semester at Riverton High School, attracting 17 students. Students learned about rig work, as well as geology, exploration, production, safety, operations, reclamation and environmental concerns. Students also took instruction to obtain an OSHA Safety Certification, which will give them a leg up should they choose to apply for oil field work right out of high school. The program will be expanded to high schools across Fremont County this fall.

From BOCES Director Sandy Barton's perspective, the program serves two goals. "First, it will help keep kids enrolled and engaged in high school through graduation, avoiding acute dropout situations for students simply anxious to work on a rig. Secondly, this program will allow students to obtain a broad view of career options in the energy industry, not just rig work."