

PCC reaches more students with donated equipment

By TRACY HARMON

THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN | Posted: Monday, April 13, 2009 12:00 am

CANON CITY - Some students are getting a head start on college by earning more than half the credits they need for an associates degree by the time they graduate high school.

Canon City High School senior Tyrel Matthews estimates he will have 36 college credits by May and will only need a total of 68 for his associates degree in automotive technology at Pueblo Community College's Fremont Campus.

"It is absolutely free and gives us a head start on what we need to know to work in a shop," Matthews said. "PCC really stepped up and got us the tools we need to succeed, and now we have our first working alignment machine."

The automotive college classes are taught at the high school in the shop which is now graced by a wheel alignment machine recently donated by Steve Lindner of Lindner Chevrolet. The \$10,000 machine enables the college to offer its Canon City students a full course of study in the automotive field, said Robert Maez, PCC auto service technology department chair.

In Pueblo, about 45 automotive students are able to work and attend college at the same time. Maez said he would like to work out the same partnerships in Canon City starting this fall.

Lindner said when his shop got new equipment, he decided to donate the alignment machine to the college because it still is of use for students.

"If it trains one person in here, it is worth it," Lindner told the students.

Maez told the students about paid internships that allow them to work with a mentor in an automotive shop, earn pay and get \$4,000 worth of tools when they complete the internship.

"That takes a lot of the fear away from the students about where will they work, who will their boss be and all those unknowns," Maez said.

Robin Gooldy, Fremont RE-1 Schools superintendent, said such programs are preparing students for the workforce, which is particularly critical in current tough economic times.

Matthews said automotive technicians are highly trained.

"We are not just turning a wrench. It is very difficult, a hard class because it is college material," Matthews said.

The effort is worth it for students like Matthews because auto techs can earn between \$30,000 and

\$50,000 annually, while highly skilled master technicians will earn even more.

"The pay isn't bad if you ask me," Matthews said.

PCC spokesman Gary Franchi said as many as 100 students are expected to enroll this fall in the new automotive classes in Canon City, which will include Suspension and Steering I and II as well as automotive machining.

For information, call 719-296-6100.

tharmon@chieftain.com