

Mmm, Mel-O-Creams

Pleasant Plains pupils watch doughnuts being made

By **DEBRA LANDIS**

CORRESPONDENT

PLEASANT PLAINS — Doing a Mel-O-Cream doughnut is no small task.

As 125 Farmingdale Elementary School fourth-graders learned Monday, the company's bakers are just a few of the many people required to get the doughnuts from the industrial kitchens and assembly lines to the public.

Mel-O-Cream Donuts International Inc., headquartered in Springfield, ships its pre-fried and frozen doughnut products to supermarkets, convenience stores, food-service operations and other customers throughout the area.

Representatives of the company were among those who have visited the school in recent weeks as part of the Pleasant Plains School District's "Rite of Passage" program that allows students in fourth, eighth and 12th grades to research careers of interest to them.

On Monday, the pupils saw glazed and cake doughnuts being prepared — each got to sample the product, too — and inspected the interior of a tractor-trailer that

transports Mel-O-Creams.

Careers in the doughnut business include baking, robotic technology, engineering, human resources, quality control, transportation and more.

Chad Larson, quality assurance manager, said his job includes sampling doughnuts to ensure they meet Mel-O-Cream standards for taste and aesthetics, among other factors.

"I have the coolest job because I get to taste fresh, hot doughnuts," he said with a smile.

Larson and Jim McGowan, transportation supervisor for Mel-O-Cream International, said the job market is good for people interested in careers in the baking field or trucking industry. They cited the importance of college or some type of post-high school training, as well as the ability to write and speak well and be a team player.

"My father, who ran his own bakery, now works for Mel-O-Cream in marketing and sales," said Larson, who has a degree in baking science technology.

McGowan said technology, math and adherence to a host of safety and governmental regula-

tions are part of a truck driver's job.

"There's so much more to it than getting in a truck and driving," Larson said, noting that a truck, trailer and the products being hauled are worth tens of thousands of dollars.

"The truck is huge," agreed fourth-grader Kyle Dawber.

David Ryan, who heads human resources and compliance for Mel-O-Cream International, admitted he took "eight years to earn a four-year degree."

"But I got it done," he said, explaining that he worked while taking college classes.

Asked by a student what his favorite part of the job was, Ryan replied, "Getting to come out to schools and talking with young boys and girls such as you."

Teacher Melissa Skinner-Liberman said introducing the students to a variety of careers spurs interests and provides insights into the courses and preparation needed.

Added fellow teacher Elizabeth Walter, "It helps show the importance of every career."

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