**Students, Start Your Engines!**

*Voc-Ed classes provide experience for future careers*

*MEDIA NOTE: These classes offer great interviews and visuals. If you would like to visit the classroom and talk with students, please reach out to the media contact listed below.*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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(Berlin, WI) When Berlin High School industrial arts teacher Paul O’Kon began teaching students how to fix and repair small engines 10 years ago, he couldn’t imagine what the course would evolve into. The class grew in popularity, there were requests for more advanced classes and O’Kon became certified by Briggs and Stratton in small engine repair. He now teaches an entry level course about how engines work as well as an advanced small engines class. “The classes combine what some would refer to as ‘old school vocational education’ with today’s technology requirements, so it’s very appealing to students,” said O’Kon.

“Students love the challenge of developing an understanding of engines and the technology involved and then using that knowledge to work on projects,” he said. “Students disassemble engines provided by the school and catalog the different parts. They learn how to check manufacture specifications and explore what is needed to meet those standards. Once all of the parts pass an inspection, the students reassemble the engines and test run the machines. If they don’t run, the students have to troubleshoot why a machine didn’t work. If the engine runs, the student is given the opportunity to bring in a machine with a small engine to work on.”

“I love the challenge; the problem solving that goes into working on engines,” stated student Scott Lenz. “It makes me think about possibly doing something like this after I graduate.” O’Kon adds, “Students have been hired for jobs right out of high school because of their training in this class. Others have gone on to technical schools and colleges to learn more about working with engines through various engineering-related programs.”

O’Kon’s latest effort to expand students’ knowledge base about small engines comes through a partnership with an area small business. He has partnered with Modern Rentals, Inc. in Ripon for minor repairs on equipment. Once the repairs are made, the students will sell the equipment to staff and possibly the community in the future.
“The Advanced Small Engine class has done repairs ranging from simple tune-ups to complete rebuilds,” says O’Kon. “The students do a great job and I hope this class will continue to grow and will be able to offer our services to the community in the future.”

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About the Berlin Area School District:
The Berlin Area School District is a vibrant, community-focused Wisconsin Public School District educating more than 1,600 area youth in grades pre-K through 12th grade. It has strong academic programs, provides outstanding student services, and offers a wide range of athletics; all of which complement updated facilities that are well equipped for 21st century learning. For more information, go to: www.berlin.k12.wi.us Like us on Facebook or follow us on Twitter

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