STUDENTS SOLVING PROBLEMS

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Item Photo BY OWEN O'ROURKE
Katelyn Nadeau, a senior at Lynn English, is an intern in the engineering program at Medtronic in Danvers.

By BRIDGET TURCOTTE

LYNN — The Danvers location of an international medical device company has launched an internship program to encourage female high school students to pursue engineering and **STEM** (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) related careers. Among the six interns is Lynn English student **Katelyn Nadeau.**

Nadeau, who has always had an interest in science, said interning with the company has given her the opportunity get a better idea of what it's like to work in the field.

"I'm doing a lot of problem solving," she said. "I want to do stuff like that in college."

Medtronic, which manufactures heart catheters, is among the world's largest medical technology, services, and solutions companies. It employs more than 85,000 worldwide and over 500 people at its Danvers office.

The firm started the internship program launched after senior quality engineer and receiving inspection supervisor **Brittany Melanson** saw her younger sister participate in a similar program at her high school.

"A year or two ago I got an email from Brittany," said **Mary Sarris, executive director of the North Shore Workforce Investment Board.** "She had witnessed a program and wanted to replicate it here at Medtronic.

"She had a vision in her head," Sarris said.

"It gave me the inspiration to design the program that exists in (the) Medtronic Danvers office today," Melanson said.

The program was designed to increase the number of women pursuing careers in engineering. Close to 20 students applied for the program and six were chosen, Melanson said.

Once hired, interns work three hours per week from noon to 3 p.m. on Friday afternoons and are paid $10 per hour.

There is a week by week syllabus for the girls to follow, which includes project work with other engineers and seminars on the engineering profession.

Melanson designed the curriculum and meets with students each week to execute it. development and manufacturing engineers work with the students to solve an identified problem and lean manufacturing provides training, including problem solving training, she said. Human resources provides the girls with guidance and support.

“One of the main drivers for this program is to introduce females in high school to the field of engineering at an earlier stage in their career decision making process and get them excited about the opportunities in the engineering field,” Melanson said.

The program involves a competitive application process comparable to the application process when applying for a job with the company. Students then go through an intense interview process.

“It was like an online job application,” Nadeau said.

Medtronic worked with selected high schools to market the program. Four schools were chosen based on previous StEM work they have had with Workforce Investment Board programs, including **Danvers High School, Gloucester High School, Lynn English High School, and Peabody Learning Academy.**

“The students’ well roundedness and involvement in high school beyond academics and their leadership,” Melanson said.

In addition to having an interest in science, Nadeau also plays soccer, softball, and participates in winter track. This semester she is taking Honors Biology II, Physics I, and is a lab aid.

Medtronics also has college student interns, said senior human resources manager **Lynn Tucker**. She hopes to stay in touch with the high school interns in hopes that someday, they might pursue a career within the company.

“We are hoping Katelyn will want to come back,” Tucker said.

Sarris said the Medtronic program is inspiring other companies to launch similar opportunities.

“We’re half a year into it and already getting calls from companies interested in replicating it,” Sarris said. “This is a great program.”

Medtronic hopes to continue the program moving forward.

“We will conduct a lessons learned analysis at the end of the program and engage with the students to get feedback and make changes based on the information we receive,” Melanson said. “You would be amazed at the capability level of high school students.”