



## **Rockies Express makes donation to THS Ag Department**

by JANE LONG

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TAYLORVILLE - Ag students at Taylorville High School lingered around in the welding shop Friday afternoon, wearing their gloves and safety glasses while waiting for a trailer load of pipe to be backed into the bay.

Rockies Express Pipeline (REX) donated more than \$20,000 of miscellaneous steel pipe to the school for use in the Ag Education Department.

"We'll get a lot of use from all these different sizes and types of pipe. Kids in the welding classes and ag mechanics will be able to experiment with a lot of different welding techniques," said THS ag teacher Lee Meteer, as students from one of the classes prepared to begin the unloading process. In the three loads, pipe varied in size up to 42" in diameter.

The materials are from the multi-million dollar REX Blue Mound Compressor Station located south of Mt. Auburn in northern Christian County.

"All of the classes will be able to make use of this donation," said Meteer, who added that now most of the pipe used in class is about two inches in diameter.

REX and its sub-contractors have been working in northern Christian County for over a year as a part of a project to erect a natural gas pipeline from supply-rich areas out west to markets in the eastern United States.

"We strive to be good neighbors every step of the way on this project," said Allen Fore, spokesman for Rockies Express. "We try to have a positive impact on each of the communities along the pipeline.

"Especially in these difficult economic times, we're happy to provide these materials for the students' use. We understand how important this can be for the local school district."

THS principal Tom Campbell, assistant principal Matt Hutchison and district superintendent Dr. Gregg Fuerstenau were on hand to add their thanks to the company for the donation.

"It was very beneficial for the students to visit the compressor station earlier this year, and this donation will be very helpful in our welding classes here," said

Campbell.

"Rockies Express has had a very beneficial economic impact on this community in many ways, with all the workers who were here. The school district is very appreciative of this contribution," added Dr. Fuerstenau.

In April Rockies Express hosted a group of students from THS ag classes, who toured the compressor station and met with professional pipeline workers about careers in the growing pipeline industry.

"That trip allowed the students to have a better understanding of the career opportunities in welding and other types of work related to pipelines. It was a good experience for all of them," added Meter.

Fore said that work on the pipeline itself is complete in this area and that REX hopes to have natural gas flowing in the pipe in Illinois by late May, explaining that weather has been the biggest problem in completing work at the compressor station.

"This is one of the largest natural gas pipelines built in the past 25 years," explained Fore. "As this country works to decrease its dependence on foreign energy sources, it's important to create transmission systems like this for future."

The pipeline running through three townships in northern Christian County is part of a 1679-mile project to carry up to 1.8 billion cubic feet of natural gas per day from Colorado to Ohio when it's fully operational.

#### Photo



***Representatives from Rockies Express Pipeline donated more than \$20,000 of pipe to the Ag Department at Taylorville High School Friday afternoon. Shown here are students from one of the ag classes, along with (front row, from left) Rockies Express chief site inspector Garvin Suggs, THS ag teacher Lee Meter, Rockies Express spokesman Allen Fore and (from right) assistant principal Matt Hutchison and principal Tom Campbell.***