

# Pride, inspiration, education at heart of local expo

By Garrett Brnger Sentinel Staff | Posted: Thursday, September 20, 2012 12:15 pm

Looms, fire engines, lobster traps and spacecraft parts; this exposition encompasses them all.

The “From Steam Engines to the Mars Rover: 350 Years of Innovations and Engineering” exposition Saturday at the Sugar River Valley Regional Technical Center in Claremont will display American-made technology in an effort to inspire local youth to go into the fields of manufacturing, engineering and science.

Northern Heritage Mills and the Society for the Preservation of Old Mills is putting on the exposition in conjunction with the tech center. Local companies are participating, including Timken Super Precision of Keene, which made parts for the Mars rover Curiosity, and Monadnock Paper Mills of Bennington, which has a paper charge card that looks, feels and sounds like plastic.

Northern Heritage board Chairman and society President Gerry B. DeMuro said the United States lacks engineers and hopes displays such as the 1804 Jacquard Loom — the world’s first automated machine and predecessor to the IBM computer — will motivate local students to enter the field.

“If we can inspire kids to say, ‘Holy smokes, look at that,’ that’s the spark,” he said.

He also hopes the exposition will get parents talking to their kids about job opportunities in the fields.

“It’s developing a conversation before (the kids) even get to school.”

It’s also an attempt to spark some national pride. Everything from the displays to the food — corn, hot dogs and cider — is made in the USA, DeMuro said.

Another one of the exposition’s goals is to shock visitors with the rate of innovation through displays such as two pickup trucks — one from 1930 and another from 2012 — side-by-side.

“You would believe they’re from different planets,” DeMuro said. “That’s not even a hundred years.”

Other exhibiting companies include John Deere, Caterpillar, Hypotherm, Segway, Cabot Cheese and the N.H. Department of Transportation. More than half the companies are from New Hampshire, DeMuro said.

> The exposition runs Saturday from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Sugar River Valley Regional Technical Center, 111 South St., Claremont.