

Claremont expo spotlights innovation and engineering

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CLAREMONT — Championing the world of manufacturing, a Saturday expo plans to highlight the history of American-made products and the innovations of today.

The nonprofit Northern Heritage Mills, the Society for the Preservation of Old Mill New England and the Sugar River Valley Tech Center in Claremont are inviting the public to attend an innovation and engineering expo.

The expo — “From Steam Engines to the Mars Rover: 350 Years of Innovations and Engineering” — runs from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday at the Sugar River Valley Tech Center, 111 South St. The event is free and open to the public. Gerry DeMuro of Northern Heritage Mills said the event is educational and fun for the whole family.

“Our goal is not to sell the products. Our goal is to inspire kids to be creative and start their own businesses,” he said. “We are demonstrating and showcasing American innovation.” New Hampshire was a manufacturing leader during the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, DeMuro said, and Claremont at that time was bustling with activity. “What’s interesting about Claremont, it had the 11th patent of the United States. In 1790 it had two patents on the water wheel,” DeMuro said.

One of the companies highlighted in the expo is a historic whale oil company that now manufactures synthetic oils used on the Mars Rover, he said. Another manufacturer, Cabot Cheese, is also attending with samples of its products, he said. Attendees are encouraged to build their own time capsule and write a letter to themselves to include in the capsule. A farmer is bringing corn for free roasted corn, and hot dogs and cider will also be served. John Deere plans to display a multi-fueled tractor from the 1930s, and Caterpillar plans to display a state-of-the-art bulldozer.

Northern Heritage Mills would like to eventually create a permanent educational center for the history and innovation of manufacturing in Claremont, DeMuro said. The nonprofit’s goal is to get children as well as their parents and the general public excited about the manufacturing and engineering fields. “We’re trying to create excitement and appreciation for studying engineering. There are a lot of jobs available, and, in fact, there are a lot of companies that have a demand for good workers and they can’t find them,” DeMuro said. Innovation requires inspiring the region’s creative talent, he said.

“You can’t make the same product all the time,” DeMuro said. “Any time you make something new that translates into jobs and a stronger economy.”

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