

## **Northeast Iowa high school student networks with state legislators and envisions future skilled trades career**

Since Emma Tan began taking classes at West Central High School as a freshman, she has been building toward a career in the skilled trades. Now a high school junior, Emma is beginning to narrow her goals to carpentry, welding and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields.

Her interest has grown in part because of the Career Learning Link program at Northeast Iowa Community College (NICC). The program introduces high school students to careers through Work-Based Learning, job shadowing and mentoring. In February, the student joined an NICC delegation for the Community College on the Hill event at the state capitol where she shared her career ambitions and story.

“Participating in Career Learning Link has helped me to be able narrow down and explore different careers that are available. I was surprised at how much I was actually able to gain from the trip. I networked with legislators and received helpful advice regarding my future career path. I shared my story with legislators, and they were supportive of my endeavors to reach my goals,” Emma stated.

In three years, Emma has earned 30 college credits through a concurrent enrollment agreement between West Central and NICC. She has a head start on an Associate of Arts degree. She enjoys shop classes, woodworking and carpentry courses offered at her high school.

“Another field of interest to me is welding. I enjoy the precision of the work and learning the techniques. Welding is an art, and although I don’t have much experience yet, it is a skill I hope to master someday,” she explained. “Although my future plans are currently undecided, I’ve been considering taking an apprenticeship. I have also been contemplating attending a trade school to expand my knowledge on the fields that interest me. It’s difficult knowing exactly what I want to do, being that I’m still in 11th grade, but I have confidence that whatever direction I take my career in, I can be successful.”

A native of the Detroit, Mich., area, Emma and her family moved to Iowa in 2004. She will graduate from West Central High School in May 2020.