

## **Homegrown Creates Synergy for Area Manufacturer, Educators and Elementary Students**

Written by Automatic Spring Products Corporation

In May 2018, Automatic Spring Products Corporation (ASPC) embarked on a process with many unknowns. We are a community-minded organization always willing to be involved, so when The Chamber invited us to participate in the pilot program “Homegrown Design Thinking”, we jumped at the opportunity. The goal of this grassroots program is to provide “hands on”, curriculum driven learning experiences for students by providing real challenges facing local employers.

ASPC’s goal was to provide a meaningful experience for the elementary school students. Our hope was to walk away with creative solutions for real work obstacles. Young students have endless questions, ideas, and creative visions for many of the problems facing manufactures today. They think “out of the box” and aren’t hindered by preconceived notions. Design Thinking embraces this mindset, gives students the freedom to create, and captures the end solutions.

As part of this dynamic process, ASPC sent six employees to a mock lesson on “Design Thinking” led by local educators. This was integral to our understanding of how to expand the students’ learning in the work environment. We partnered with 2 classrooms: 2<sup>nd</sup> grade from Peach Plains and 4<sup>th</sup> grade from Lake Hills.

ASPC’s team met with the teachers to develop the “driving question” or the problem the students worked on by asking questions, investigating ASPC’s processes, and finding potential solutions for implementation. The three-week project concluded with student groups presenting their ideas to our company, their parents, and the school system.

The students and their inquisitive participation were phenomenal! They were engaging, professional, and creative. The entire ASPC team was impressed and appreciated all the classrooms’ work. Several of the ideas for the “driving questions” were very good and in fact, we will be implementing one of the ideas from the 4<sup>th</sup> grade class.

We began the process to support our community and we ended the process with warmed hearts, renewed understanding of our school systems’ curriculum, and impressive idea generation for future consideration. We offer huge kudos to the educators, students, district, and Chamber for creating such a wonderful learning experience for all.