

PMPA Member Embraces Community Engagement

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PMPPA Member Company Precision Plus, and CEO Mike Reader, in Elkhorn, Wis., is showing manufacturers how to engage effectively to get the word out about skills needed in manufacturing.

On February 22, Precision Plus hosted an open house attended by Wisconsin Lt. Governor Rebecca Kleefisch, Wisconsin Economic Development Corp. CEO Reed Hall, staff members and local press. The shop tour allowed the attendees to see how manufacturing is an important part of the Wisconsin economy, and the critical role Precision Plus and their machinists play in making high-technology, precision-engineered components—components that are used by many companies in the state, as well as across

North America and around the world.

On February 27, Precision Plus hosted the Elkhorn Area High School Manufacturing Career Panel. “The skills gap that we

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hear about is real, and we opened our shop to show the attendees that there are great career opportunities right here in their own backyard,” Mr. Reader says. “Earn while



you learn through tuition reimbursement programs is something many families haven’t considered.”

To help students understand the nature of the opportunities available, speakers from across the industry were brought in to share their experiences. Olaf Tessarzyk, managing partner and president at ZPS America LLC, discussed the wages earned in the trade across the country and around the world. He also discussed the opportunities available nationally and internationally for skilled people in manufacturing.

“Bring your math, engineering and problem solving skills, and you can have a great career in manufacturing,” says Mr. Tessarzyk. “Our service techs earn great pay, have great careers, have good quality of life and get to travel. They are also highly respected as the people who can get your equipment back into operation when no one else can. It is a great feeling to be the ‘go-to guy or gal’ today when so many people remain unemployed.”

John Murphy of Morris Midwest discussed the companies in Wisconsin that purchased precision machined products from companies like Precision Plus. “It is a veritable ‘Who’s Who of Wisconsin manufacturers,’” he says. “While the job and opportunity is local, the fact is that the products made are vital to other companies and jobs all across the state.”

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Dan Murphy, regional sales manager and product expert with REM Sales, spoke to the 180 students in attendance and described the technologies and how they are used. “A lot of orthopedic and surgical implant components are made using Swiss machining technologies like those here at Precision Plus,” he says. “I was really impressed when about eight of the students attending, all of whom were in the highest ranking of their graduating class, came up to me to tell me two of them were considering a career in biomedical engineering. The visibility and importance of precision machining in their future field was easily seen by these students.”

Darlene Miller, CEO of Permac Industries in Burnsville, Minn., had a message for the female students in attendance. “We actually have an advantage in this industry. We think differently. Critically. Our asking ‘why?’ leads to improvements and efficiencies in processes. Our attention to detail helps minimize mistakes. But our passion helps keep everyone motivated and working toward the same goal.

“After working in manufacturing, I moved into sales, and bought an interest in the company. I grew my share and grew my company. Today we supply leading companies around the world. I was recently honored as one of 122 Women in Manufacturing by the Manufacturing Institute,” Ms. Miller continues. “Another honoree was a young woman who operates a CNC machine and designed an assembly process for her employer. I don’t know of any place with so many opportunities for a career, recognition



and to make a difference as precision machining and advanced manufacturing.”

Mr. Reader summarizes his take on the career panel, “I think this year’s Manufacturing Career Panel was a success. Despite our lovely Wisconsin weather, we engaged almost 200 students, including a valedictorian and several others at the top of their class. The best and brightest showed up. While many of them still plan on attending college, and we hope that they do, they now are aware that they have another choice besides going deep into debt. They now know that they can earn while they learn, gain a skill as they get an education and integrate their manufacturing experiences into their engineering studies.”

“Learn your skills locally, but understand that they are needed globally,” he concludes. “Your highest and best use may just be becoming a skilled craftsman in high-demand globally. Even the Swiss, who are known for their culture of manufacturing expertise and quality, are trying to find more manufacturing talent. A career in precision machining can be part of a dual path of work and education. A dual track leads to a lifetime of career success.”

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Milwaukee Area Technical College Fills the Gap

MATC fills the education and training gaps in cooperation with PMPA members by educating new machinists and training current employees in increasing skills and knowledge.

“I would encourage other PMPA members to talk with area technical colleges to work together for well-trained employees. We fill open slots during classes for continued training of industry members who want to upgrade their skills,” says Mr. Olson. “Local chapter members can work

together to arrange training with local schools to share costs. There are many options that technical colleges, like MATC, can offer to PMPA members who are looking to have well-trained employees.”

Milwaukee Area Technical College is located at 700 W. State Street, Milwaukee, Wis. 53233. Phone: 414-297-6286. Website: matc.edu.