

pulse

LORAIN COUNTY'S MAGAZINE

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Brick by Brick

How today's
training is boosting
tomorrow's workforce



Lorain County
is now a center
for bricklayer
trade training.

In the Spotlight
How the Arts Will
Light up the County



Thogus Products had a table at the Lorain County Manufacturing Career Fair at Lorain County Community College.



Bettcher Industries and A.J. Rose shared information at the Lorain County JVS Open House showcasing Manufacturing Careers.

Retooling the Workforce

The Lorain County Manufacturing Sector Partnership recognizes the opportunities for new jobs.

By Linda Feagler

Gritty workplaces. Back-breaking labor. Long hours with little pay. A dying industry.

Tony Gallo, president of the Lorain County Chamber of Commerce, is quick to dispel the adverse images the word “manufacturing” still brings to mind in the 21st century.

“Industry has clearly evolved from what it was in our parents’ and grandparents’ day,” Gallo says. “The conditions are clean and safe, jobs are designed with the latest technology in mind and the financial rewards are great.”

But the misnomers — as well as schools and parents encouraging students to follow the traditional four-year college track — have taken a toll over the last three decades. Critical shortages of skilled workers in every aspect of the trades are the sobering result.

Eight Lorain County companies have made it their mission to spread the word about the endless job possibilities in their respective fields. Absolute Machine Tools, A.J. Rose Manufacturing Co., Bettcher Industries Inc., Multilink Inc., Ridge Tool Co., Thogus Products, Watteredge, LLC and Advanced Polymer Coatings have banded together to form the Lorain County Manufacturing Sector Partnership (LCMSP) — and invite other manufacturers to join them. The partnership is designed to create public awareness of local manufacturing careers, offer work-based learning and apprenticeship opportunities and connect job seekers with employers ready to hire. The LCMSP website includes information on what positions are available that match a potential candidate’s talents and interests — no matter his or her skill level. No-cost short-term training opportunities and career counseling are offered to help individuals enhance their current skills and discover new strengths.

“You can spend a whole lot of time competing with your

peers for talent, or you can come together to find solutions,” says LCMSP interim project coordinator Judith Crocker. “Our partnership is doing just that.”

Crocker, president of MJ Crocker & Associates, LLC, a workforce talent and development company, adds that in today’s world, education is the driving force behind success in manufacturing.

“Back in the ‘80s and ‘90s, you’d hear [teens] say, ‘I don’t even need to finish high school. I can work at the steel mill,’” she says. “That isn’t the case anymore. Now, it’s as much about brain as it is brawn.”

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LCCC and the Lorain County JVS are also working with LCMSP to develop curricula centered on crucial skills.

“Our goal is to meet the needs of our students, as well as the companies we’re working with in the statewide sector partnerships’ network managed by the Ohio Manufacturers’ Association (OMA),” says Terri Burgess Sandu, LCCC’s director of Talent and Business Innovation. “We’re also leading a partnership with the Ohio Manufacturers’ Association to expand apprenticeships in the region and state. Instead of students rolling the dice and taking training in the hopes they’ll get a job, they’ll have one already as they take classes. Companies will be able to have people with the skills they’re looking for working for them and see how they progress. It’s a win-win for everyone.”