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Secretary Gassman Announces Training Grant for Coulee Region Workers in Advanced Manufacturing, as part of Governor's Grow Plan

In La Crosse, Labor Secretary awards \$65,000, one of 10 grants in \$850,000 initiative

LA CROSSE – As part of Governor Doyle's \$850,000 Emerging Industries Skills Partnership initiative, Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman today announced a \$65,000 grant for the Western Wisconsin Workforce Development Board, funding to train 50 workers in welding and computer numerical control (CNC) machining for the region's advanced manufacturing sector.

Governor Doyle made the Emerging Industries Skills Partnership (EISP) part of his ***Grow Wisconsin – The Next Steps*** strategy for economic and workforce development. The grant that Secretary Gassman announced on his behalf will leverage additional resources, providing total funding of nearly \$102,000 for the project, *Manufacturing the Future!*

"As Governor Doyle has said, manufacturing is our heritage and our future, especially advanced manufacturing, and with this training grant, we will help ensure a skilled workforce, as we compete at the high end in a new era of advanced manufacturing," Secretary Gassman said. "This grant will build on the success of an earlier Grow Wisconsin initiative, the region's Manufacturing Academies, in helping academy participants take additional steps on their career pathways. Furthermore, it will include training for incumbent workers, as another strategic investment in our future."

The grant is one of 10 being awarded under the Governor's \$850,000 EISP initiative, providing new and incumbent workers with the necessary skills to meet workforce demands in advanced manufacturing, biotechnology and renewable energy.

Secretary Gassman announced the grant during a visit to Pacal Industries, one of the region's manufacturers whose workers will benefit from the training. The grant was awarded to Workforce Connections, Inc., also known as the Western Wisconsin Workforce Development Board. Western Technical College and the Equipment and Metal Manufacturing Association (EMMA) also are partners in the project.

EMMA identified specific training needs, such as welding and CNC machining. As outlined by Secretary Gassman, the grant will address those needs by:

- Strengthening the partnership between Workforce Connections, Western Technical College and EMMA to meet the skill sets needed in advanced manufacturing in the region;
- Providing additional training to at least 15 young adults in the Manufacturing Academies, specifically helping them complete the occupational skills component of the Building Employment Skills Training (BEST) program;
- Boosting the skills of at least 35 incumbent workers through training in LEAN principles, Enterprise Resource Training, Critical Core Manufacturing Skills and other programs.

- more -

Accepting the grant from Secretary Gassman was Jerry Hanoski, Executive Director of Workforce Connections, Inc. Representing EMMA was Jeffrey Kroes, Operations Manager at Pacal and Vice President of the EMMA Board of Directors.

“Today we are seeing a huge demand for welders in order to meet the demand for our products,” Kroes said in a letter supporting the grant application. “We currently use high technology equipment such as robotic welders and automated seam welders, and welding skills are primary to the training on this technology. A person who cannot weld cannot hope to properly program and operate a robotic welder.”

Walker Stainless Equipment in New Lisbon, manufacturer of stainless steel tanks, is another employer in the region involved in the project.

“We are seeing a huge demand for stainless steel welders in order to meet the demand for our product line,” Nancy Jacques, Human Resource Manager, said in a letter supporting the EISP grant application.

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