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Secretary Baumbach: Youth Apprenticeship Prepares Future Workforce

During Racine area visit, DWD Secretary cites strong partnerships as key to local program's success

RACINE – Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Scott Baumbach and Deputy Secretary Reggie Newson met today with regional leaders of the Youth Apprenticeship program in Racine County, hearing from former apprentices and partners on how their training has led them to family-sustaining careers.

“Youth apprentices are a vital link in the chain of workforce training between high school and a career,” Secretary Baumbach said. “Programs like this one in Racine County are valuable for preparing students for occupations that are in demand, such as manufacturing and information technology. Youth apprenticeship is one more way that we are working to make Wisconsin the workforce of choice under Governor Walker’s leadership.”

Wisconsin’s youth apprentice program began 20 years ago and has trained over 15,000 participants in valuable career-enhancing skills, providing a smooth transition between high school and the workplace. Apprenticeship partners may include school districts, technical colleges or chambers of commerce. In Racine County, Racine Area Manufacturers and Commerce administers the youth apprenticeship program in conjunction with the Racine Unified School District, and is currently training 68 students at 34 employers throughout the county. DWD has invested \$53,125 in the local program for the 2011-12 year.

Secretary Baumbach and Deputy Secretary Newson met with partners at Pioneer Products Inc. of Racine, which employs former apprentices Jared Rosiensi and Brian Gronholm, who went through the program at Racine Unified School District. The DWD leaders also learned more about the District’s North Star Vision, which promotes the ultimate goal of every graduate being ready for a career and/or college.

During the 2010-11 school year, the Racine School to Career Partnership had 52 students eligible for completion of a youth apprenticeship program; 51 of those students completed their program and graduated from high school, a 98 percent completion rate.

“Through the strong partnerships we have in Racine between education, workforce development, the private sector and other stakeholders, a new generation of workers is being prepared for opportunities after high school,” Secretary Baumbach said. “And, we thank private-sector employers like Pioneer Products for their commitment to this program and to providing opportunities for the workforce of tomorrow.”

Wisconsin’s youth apprenticeship program is overseen by the Department of Workforce Development’s Bureau of Apprenticeship Standards. Programs throughout the state match students and employers in a multi-year program that combines vocational instruction and on-the-job training with typical high school coursework to allow students to explore post-secondary career options.