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Lt. Governor Kleefisch, Secretary Newson Praise Second Chance Partners as Model for Educating, Training New Generation of Skilled Workers

Work-based learning program engages high school students, prepares them for skilled jobs, rewarding careers in manufacturing, other demand sectors

MILWAUKEE – During a visit today to Lakeside Manufacturing, Lt. Governor Rebecca Kleefisch and Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Reggie Newson praised Second Chance Partners for Education as an effective work-based learning model that engages high school students, providing them the education and training they need to pursue rewarding careers in manufacturing and other demand sectors.

“Lakeside Manufacturing is one of more than 80 business partners throughout the state that are stepping up to address the skills gap as participants in the Second Chance Partners model,” Lt. Governor Kleefisch said. “This program is reflective of the kinds of creative and dynamic approaches that Wisconsin needs to address the skills gap and prepare workers to succeed in the modern workforce.”

Second Chance Partners for Education, a certified Youth Apprenticeship (YA) program for well over a decade, specializes in engaging high school students who prefer a work-based learning environment to traditional classroom instruction and excel in a manufacturing setting.

Generac Power Systems launched Second Chance Partners for Education in 1996 to bolster the YA manufacturing program. Today, the YA Second Chance Partners for Education program provides training and career opportunities to 130 juniors and seniors at 13 education centers in nine counties throughout southeastern Wisconsin, the Fox Valley and Green Bay area. In addition to over 80 businesses, 36 high schools are involved in the remarkably successful collaborative effort.

Of all students enrolled, 90 percent successfully complete the program, and 60 percent succeed in entering the workforce immediately, the majority of them in manufacturing. The remaining graduates either enroll in post secondary education or advance to adult apprenticeship programs. With the education and training they received, some choose to enter the military and serve their country.

To help address the skills and knowledge gap, DWD has approved an expansion of the Second Chance Partners for Education, allowing it to operate as statewide YA Consortium and work directly with schools throughout the state. The expanded role in educating and training students will facilitate program management and help leverage additional partnerships with local manufacturers, school districts and technical colleges.

In addition, DWD is giving school districts the option of working with more than one YA consortium. With the added flexibility, districts can retain existing partnerships with local YA consortia, but also use the unique and highly successful Second Chance alternative that immerses students in a learning environment where they can excel and earn their high school diploma while gaining work experience and job skills.

“At the DWD, we are focused on workforce solutions that demonstrate innovation, flexibility and positive outcomes, and Second Chance Partners for Education has shown positive results time and again,” Secretary Newson said. “We look forward to seeing the program bring its model to even more communities in Wisconsin.”

(more)

Second Chance Partners President Stephanie Borowski said: "Second Chance Partners for Education is making a significant difference in the lives of youth at risk and uncertain about their future. This innovative approach has given them a new start, while providing manufacturers a new generation of skilled workers. We are pleased to have the support of Lt. Governor Kleefisch and Secretary Newson, and we are eager to engage more students across the state to find success in our work-based learning model and prepare them for meaningful careers in manufacturing or other sectors in need of skilled and prepared workers."

Second Chance Partners Success Stories

During the visit, Secretary Newson and Lt. Governor Kleefisch heard the story of Theo Reese, a student at West Allis High Central High School who enrolled in the Second Chance Partners program and is doing his work-based learning at Lakeside Manufacturing. Reese struggled academically before the program and is now on track to complete his high school diploma, graduate with valuable work experience, and pursue an opportunity to continue his education in engineering.

A former participant, Kevin Gatling, was one of the first graduates of the program over a decade ago, working at Generac. However, following the chance he was given, he went on to complete the adult apprentice program and is still working at Generac to this day, having become a leader and mentor to those around him.