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Wisconsin's First-in-Nation Apprenticeship Program Receives National Award

Acclaimed as trailblazer, Wisconsin's program remains at forefront of innovation

WASHINGTON – On behalf of the state of Wisconsin, Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Executive Assistant Georgia Maxwell on Wednesday, August 1, will accept a National Registered Apprenticeship Trailblazer and Innovator Award for Wisconsin's Apprenticeship Program, a model to the nation for more than a century.

"Apprenticeship is tried-and-true, on-the-job training that we know produces results, and Wisconsin continues to lead the way with this program just it did over 100 years ago when it became the first state to enact apprenticeship legislation," Governor Scott Walker said. "I want to thank the DWD, employers, organized labor, the technical college system and other partners that have made Wisconsin's apprenticeship so successful over the years."

Executive Assistant Maxwell said Wisconsin apprenticeship remains at the forefront of innovation to this day.

"We continue to improve and expand the program, providing more opportunities for individuals to earn a pay check while learning skills that lead to family-supporting jobs," she said. "In our Centennial year, we were the first state offering apprenticeships in dairy grazing and in operating wastewater treatment plant. We're also the first Midwest state to partner with the piping industry and help our returning veterans enter an accelerated apprenticeship training program in welding. "

The U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Apprenticeship (USDOL/OA) and the national Advisory Committee on Apprenticeship (ACA) presented the award as part of their national summit celebrating the 75th anniversary of federal apprenticeship law. The Wisconsin Apprenticeship Program celebrated its centennial last year.

"This award is a great recognition of the dedication and commitment of a century's worth of apprenticeship stakeholders – employers, unions, apprentices, technical colleges and state government," said Karen Morgan, Director of the DWD Bureau of Apprenticeship Standards and former president of the National Association of State and Territorial Apprenticeship Directors.

Over the past 10 years, Wisconsin has averaged more than 10,000 active apprentices in more than 200 different trades at any given time. The structured system of training is designed to prepare individuals for skilled occupations. The program combines on-the-job training under the supervision of experienced journey workers with related classroom instruction. Those who successfully complete a prescribed number of hours of training become certified skilled journeyworkers.

Highlights of Wisconsin's Registered Apprenticeship trail-blazing program structure include:

- ♦ A formal "Transition to Trainer" course that helps apprentices pass on their trade as a better Journeyworker.
- ♦ Strong sponsor commitment, including agreement to pay apprentices while they attend related instruction.
- ♦ More than 100 state and local trade advisory committees to help maintain and modernize programs.
- ♦ Apprenticeship stakeholders partnering with technical colleges, the primary providers of related instruction.

To learn more about apprenticeship in Wisconsin, go to www.wisconsinapprenticeship.org.