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DWD Secretary Highlights Tried-and-True Apprenticeship Program to Fill Need for Skilled Workers in Wisconsin

Secretary Newson visits Sargento Foods as part of statewide push to boost program participation

PLYMOUTH – During a visit today to Sargento Foods, Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Reggie Newson called on employers and job seekers to consider Wisconsin's Apprenticeship program, which has produced skilled workers to meet employers' needs for more than a century. The Secretary's visit is part of a statewide education and outreach effort to increase employer and job seeker participation in apprenticeship.

"Wisconsin's apprenticeship program has played a key role in connecting employers with workers seeking an opportunity to enter highly-skilled employment," Secretary Newson said. "Any Wisconsinite seeking a good-paying career in Wisconsin should give serious consideration to apprenticeship. Apprentices who graduate from Wisconsin's apprenticeship program have demonstrated vocational skills and can provide significant value to businesses, strengthening private-sector job creation and increasing economic growth across the state."

As part of DWD's new apprenticeship outreach effort, a variety of materials have been designed to engage employers and potential apprentices. Highlights include:

- A "toolkit" of updated brochures, folders and educational materials for regional representatives to provide directly to employers explaining how apprenticeship can provide them with well-trained and loyal workers, which can make their businesses more productive.
- An educational video that speaks directly to employers about the benefits of apprenticeship with a brochure titled *The Top 10 Reasons to Train Apprentices*. A companion public service announcement (PSA) is also available at DWD's YouTube Channel at www.youtube.com/wiworkforce.
- Postcards, display ads for online and print that convey the value of Apprenticeship to employers.
- A new PSA encouraging individuals to consider apprenticeship, along with outdoor billboards in the Green Bay, Madison, Milwaukee, and Wausau areas that will be seen by motorists an estimated 4.5 million times during the month of May.

Lou Gentine, Sargento's Chairman & CEO, and Louie Gentine, President & Chief Customer Office, joined Secretary Newson at today's announcement. They noted that Sargento Foods has benefited since the company began training apprentices and is currently training 2 apprentices to be maintenance technicians. Since 1993, Sargento has graduated a total of 14 apprentices.

Lou Gentine added, "Lifelong learning is one of the important tenets of our Sargento culture of 'People, Pride & Progress.' Apprenticeship programs provide career opportunities to our employees and provide the skill sets we need as a company to continue to grow."

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Also joining Secretary Newson was Dr. Michael Lanser, President of Lakeshore Technical College, which provides classroom instruction. Apprenticeship training combines on-the-job training with a journeyworker tailored to employers' specific skills needs, and classroom instruction, typically at a local technical college.

Apprentices are enrolled for four to five years, increasing their wages as their skills develop. Apprentices graduate from the apprenticeship program with a nationally-recognized credential, providing employers with a highly-skilled, loyal workforce. Apprentices who graduate can find work in good-paying jobs. The average annual wage in manufacturing occupations is over \$51,400, more than \$10,000 above the average annual wage for all occupations in Wisconsin.

Wisconsin's apprenticeship program was the first in the nation when it was signed into law in 1911. Since that time, Wisconsin has trained thousands of apprentices in a wide variety of occupations. In 2012, Wisconsin had 9,608 apprentices training in over 200 occupations, including 4,832 working in construction, 1,689 in industrial and manufacturing trades, and 3,087 in the service industry.

Even so, Secretary Newson noted that the outreach initiative is designed to engage even more individuals to take advantage of the program and to help turn around a decline in employer participation that has been seen nationally and in Wisconsin over the past decade.

As part of Governor Walker's commitment to Wisconsin Apprenticeship, his 2013–15 budget proposal includes permanent state funding for Wisconsin's apprenticeship program.

DWD partnered with Laughlin Constable, a regional advertising agency and the primary vendor for the state Department of Tourism, to invest in the comprehensive education and outreach effort to build interest in the apprenticeship program.

For more information, visit www.WisconsinApprenticeship.org.