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Secretary Newson Congratulates Ocean Spray on Expanded Apprenticeship Program, Urges Other Employers to Partner in Building Skilled Workforce

Three-day Apprenticeship Conference, including Apprentice Expo, starts Sunday in Wisconsin Dells

KENOSHA – Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Reggie Newson today congratulated Ocean Spray on its early success as a new partner in the Wisconsin Apprenticeship program and its decision to sponsor more apprentices in the proven on-the-job training program that employers increasingly see as a skills gap solution.

"Just six months ago, we welcomed Ocean Spray into the Apprenticeship program, and today, we applaud Ocean Spray on a great start and its expansion of the program to include more apprentices," Secretary Newson said.

"Apprenticeship is part of Governor Walker's comprehensive effort to ensure a highly skilled, well-trained workforce with over \$100 million in workforce investments. More employers see it as a way to address the skills gap.

Ocean Spray entered the on-the-job training program on August 12, 2013, and its apprentices training to be maintenance technicians part of a significant increase in apprenticeships overall. Last year, the number of new contracts in all three sectors – construction, industrial/manufacturing, and service – increased by 31 percent compared to new contracts the previous and by 56 percent compared to new contracts three years ago.

On Secretary Newson's behalf, Deputy Secretary Jonathan Barry visited the Kenosha Ocean Spray plant, where he joined Plant Director Tim Peoples in signing a contract expanding the Ocean Spray's program. Ocean Spray began by sponsoring three apprentices in Maintenance Technician Apprenticeship training and is now adding two more.

"Ocean Spray's ability to expand our markets and products is directly tied to our ability to find employees with the right skills," Peoples said. "We chose to start an apprenticeship program at our Kenosha plant to develop our workforce while providing career growth opportunities."

Secretary Newson urged other employers that are interested in Wisconsin Apprenticeship to learn more by attending the 26th Biennial Apprenticeship Conference from January 26-28 in Wisconsin Dells. The conference at the Chula Vista Resort is themed *The Apprenticeship Solution: Meeting the Workforce Challenge*. The event will include a special one-day Apprentice Expo on January 27 that is expected to draw hundreds of high school students.

For more information: www.WisconsinApprenticeship.org.

For conference details and registration, visit: <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/apprenticeship/conference/default.htm>.