

LEARNING AND EARNING In The Trades



Youth Apprenticeship Program Builds Tomorrow's Workforce

Students and area businesses are benefitting from real-world connections between education and employment by participating in the Wisconsin's Youth Apprenticeship (YA) program (an initiative of the Department of Workforce Development). The Youth Apprenticeship (YA) program is a rigorous one-or two-year program for high school juniors and seniors that combine academic and technical classroom instruction with paid work experience, allowing them to explore a career while still in high school.

After the construction industry took a hit, many students steered away from continuing education in the trades and focused on four-year degrees. The realities of an aging infrastructure and a maturing workforce remain. Now that the economy is starting to turn around, the demand for skilled labor is significant. Miron Construction has worked with students interested and engaged in construction trades by providing structured office, field and classroom time.

Last year the Talent Collaborative, a division of the Fox Cities Chamber, brought together representatives of Miron Construction and Menasha High School to discuss the newly created General Construction

Above: Dave Riemer, Project Forman at Miron Construction instructs Menasha High student Kaise Paulson.

Below: Menasha High student Justin Stanchik assembles desks.



Youth Apprenticeship program. It made perfect sense to have students from Menasha High School apply for this program since Miron was involved in a major renovation at the school and had a long-term work-site on the campus. All the requirements needed for a student to be successful as well as the expectations of Miron were discussed and tracked throughout the process.

Miron was eager to engage the youth apprentices in the trades by working alongside them and lending their expertise in all aspects of general construction. As the YA program was new to Miron, they wanted to begin by hiring one student. In September, Menasha High School (Tech Ed Department, School-to-Work Coordinator and the Principal) had identified three students to interview for one YA position with Miron. The interviews took place and Miron was so impressed with the three candidates they interviewed that they offered the opportunity to all three students (two seniors and one junior). These three YA's were hired as Miron employees. When asked how this works with the Union, the reply was: Unions are very supportive, and they will assist in any way that enhances the trades.

"It was very enlightening in the interview process to identify the student's passions."

Their enthusiasm is refreshing for the industry. By engaging them at this age, their interest level remains high. Many students who have tried further education, and have not been successful in a career path, seem to lose passion for things that motivate them. Then, they may fall back to a mode of "whatever pays the bills." Our crews welcome the students as it gives them an opportunity to pass on their skilled trade to the next generation. We pair up students with mentors. The journey worker mentors look at the assignment of being a role model as a reward for their years of effort in developing their own personal skills", said David Walsh, Vice President, Leadership and Organizational Development, Miron Construction Co., Inc.

"The students started their first day at Miron in mid-November and have had some great experiences," School to Work Coordinator, Mr. Hurley said. "This experience has been remarkable. Miron has been a great partner to work with. Everyone involved has worked hard to make sure that this is a successful and rewarding experience for the students."

Johnny, one of the Youth Apprentices said, "Working with Miron has been an extremely rewarding experience. I have truly learned a lot about the field I am planning to pursue, and feel grateful to have had the opportunity to see all of the trades. I am very thankful to Miron for this opportunity."

The Youth Apprentice program provides employers with an opportunity to grow their talent pool. We asked another organization who is developing their future talent through the YA program their thoughts on the program. Faith Technologies also finds that the best way to educate students is by providing a behind-the-scenes look at the career opportunities in the construction and manufacturing industry. It's also a great way to introduce them to our company in the hopes that someday they will call the Fox Cities home and begin their career here. The program helps make the connection between learning and earning while helping students discover new skills that they didn't know they had. For Faith Technologies, it's about sparking an interest.

Students and parents interested in Youth Apprenticeship opportunities should contact their high school School-to-Work coordinator or CESA 6 Youth Apprenticeship Specialist, Tania Kilpatrick at 920-236-0531.

Businesses interested in discussing their current/future talent challenges please contact Patty Milka, Vice President of Talent and Education, Talent Collaborative, Fox Cities Chamber at 920-734-7101 or pmilka@foxcitieschamber.com.



Miron Project Forman Nick Marek with Menasha High Student Johnny Smolinski.

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