

Manufacturing program helps job-seekers make MOST of opportunity

By KELLY MERRITT

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NAPLES — Darrell Tourtillott has a mechanical mind. He spent 33 years in the automotive business in Naples. He worked as a repair technician and shop manager throughout his career, but recently became unemployed for the second time this past year.

The car business is one of the worst hit by the economic collapse.

But Tourtillott kept the faith and applied for work on the Florida Employment website, EmployFlorida.com.

“Once you apply for unemployment, there is a program with resume building and it really helps you in a job search,” Tourtillott said. “I love to work with my hands so I knew my skill set would transfer right into manufacturing.”

Tourtillott used the online program to apply for jobs. He applied to become a student in the Florida Manufacturing Extension Partnership Mobile Outreach Skills Training (MOST) program.

This partnership with the Economic Development Council of Collier County allowed several students to take part this week in skills training in Naples-based Haynes Corp.’s back lot. Upon successful completion of the two-week program, six of the students will have new jobs at Haynes. Tourtillott will be one of them.

“I’m studying machining to learn how to run and operate a computer numerical control machine,” Tourtillott said. “This means a great deal to me because it’s given me the training I need to further my career and I’m learning a new trade, which is something I’ll have for a lifetime.”

Applicants in the program are academically tested, drug tested, receive a background check and must pass personality interviews.

“Once an applicant obtained entry into the program, we then set them up for interviews with the three participating manufacturers who selected who they would like to work with,” project manager Phyllis Morese said. “Then matches were made upon which time the candidates began training.”

Haynes Corp. is one of those three local companies. Haynes makes precision diesel fuel injection systems for heavy-duty engines and is taking part in the training along with Pelican Wire and Thomas Riley Artisans' Guild.

Ten Collier residents are enrolled in the job training and placement program, something manufacturing executives say helps them find qualified workers.

"We are moving our Los Angeles operations here to Collier County and we've also been approved to build a new green facility, a 25,000-square-foot factory right behind our current location," said Daniel J. Neely, Haynes' director of manufacturing who came from a General Motors background. "One of the biggest problems for an industry in Collier County is finding qualified help."

Neely is now faced with finding skilled workers in a time when expansion looms heavy on the company's horizon.

Grand Rapids, Mich., native Cliff Streeter found his job at Haynes on Monster.com and relocated to Naples, but Neely said it's rarely that easy to find the right people.

"That's why the MOST program is so great – the two-week boot camp teaches people in Collier County to do what we do here at Haynes," Neely said. "When six of those people start work here Monday morning, they will be able to speak the same language as a seasoned veteran."

The newly trained MOST graduates will be placed with Haynes veterans so the learning process can continue. The MOST program also supplies follow-up training as needed.

The program curriculum includes a day of training, followed by an eight-hour block of shop math and another eight hours of blueprint reading. Then students have 16 hours of quality, metrology and gauging and eight to 10 hours of homework over the weekend via online courses.

"This program doesn't train for the sake of training," Meadows said. "This is about training for the actual position, so these students can hit the ground running three or four rungs up the ladder and ready to be a productive member of the company."

Week two includes computer numeric control milling, turning and other training. Students learn the language to program the machines, including computer aided design and computer aided machining.

"A company is more likely to hire a skilled worker because then there is less turnover and a lower cost of recruitment. So these graduates are pre-destined to go into these positions," Meadows said.

"It's very exciting for us to complete this mobile training session here in Collier County at the Haynes headquarters, who received one of our excellence in industry awards,"

said Tammie Nemecek, president and CEO of the Economic Development Council of Collier County.

Nemecek said the manufacturing industry is often overlooked and that people should recognize the many career opportunities these companies provide.

For Abel Hernandez, husband of 23 years and father to two children, graduation and his first day back at work can't come soon enough.

"I'm very excited to get back to work, because I was laid off eight weeks ago and decided to get trained for a different kind of job," Hernandez said. "I was a plant operator so I'm very used to that environment."

Hernandez will be working at Haynes making mechanical parts.

"This training provides different options for different jobs and although it's not easy, I would recommend it to other people who are willing to learn," he said. "It is hard work and you have to put a lot of effort and time – for most of us, it's been a long time since we were in school."

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