Skills gap addressed as manufacturing program comes to Tampa Bay

M.O.S.T.® Program Delivers Training, Employment

TAMPA, Fla., May 16, 2011 – The manufacturing industry has a long-standing history in the Tampa Bay region; however similar to other cities across the nation, Tampa companies are finding a shortage in skilled manufacturing workers that can fill open positions. To combat this shortage, the Florida Manufacturing Extension Partnership (Florida MEP) will provide specialized training as part of the Mobile Outreach Skills Training (M.O.S.T.®) program, for 20 individuals around the region seeking manufacturing jobs.

The M.O.S.T.® program is a fast-track, intensive skills training, recruitment, assessment and placement program that prepares unemployed and underemployed individuals, including returning veterans and minorities, for production jobs in less time than traditional programs. Seeing the demand for skilled machinists in the region, the Upper Tampa Bay Chamber of Commerce saw a benefit to bringing the M.O.S.T.® program to the area. This represents the first time the M.O.S.T.® program will be in Tampa Bay.

"We are proud to partner with the Florida MEP and bring the specialized resources of the M.O.S.T.® program to Tampa Bay," said Jerry Custin, president and CEO of Upper Tampa Bay Chamber of Commerce. "Through the networking capabilities offered through the Upper Tampa Bay Manufacturers Association, we have identified several employers interested in participating in the program."

Training, which will begin in early June and run for two weeks, will be conducted in a state-of-the-art mobile training facility stationed by Florida MEP at Tampa Bay Downs. Following the completion of the training, the graduates will all receive permanent employment with the various participating employers. This project is part of a statewide training program financed with a $100,000 U.S. Department of Labor grant and a $500,000 Workforce Florida Inc. grant with a goal to leverage an equal amount of state, local and private-sector funding.

The M.O.S.T.® program provides quick-start job training for small and mid-sized manufacturers seeking entry-level workers. The program's mobile training unit is outfitted with state-of-the-art training equipment that allows participants an opportunity to upgrade or learn new manufacturing skills. Because of its mobility, the program is able to move to areas where jobs and potential employees are located. The unit is generally situated onsite at an employer's facility or other location convenient for trainees and the company. Training, which is often customized to suit the needs of the participating employer, helps reduce the time typically required for new employees to become fully productive.

"There is a myth out there that there are no jobs. The reality is that our shortage is in the lack of skilled people, not manufacturing jobs," said Dick Peck, chairman of Florida MEP and owner of QTM, Inc in Oldsmar, one of five employers involved in the training program. "The M.O.S.T.® program is very important in jump-starting prospective employees for a career in manufacturing. Graduates of the program benefit from not only learning the basic manufacturing skill sets, but the program also sorts out work habits and the basic discipline to show up on time and be ready to work, which is invaluable."

Peck added, "Since we have numerous companies involved in the upcoming Tampa Bay session, the training will be basic manufacturing skills; however, if a single company has a specific need and will commit to hiring 10 employees, then the training can be structured to fit their specific need. It is a tremendous program that has been successfully implemented in Mississippi, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Connecticut, Rhode Island and in Florida."

For more information on the M.O.S.T.® program, visit www.timewisemost.com or contact Dr. Claudia Follet at 321-266-0677.
For information on the Upper Tampa Bay Manufacturers Association, contact Jerry Custin at 813-855-4233.