



Oct 2018

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More than 1100 Students to Experience 2018 Manufacturing Days

September 14, 2018

Blackhawk Technical College (BTC) will celebrate Manufacturing Days, on October 4 and 5, 2018. The event is part of a national effort to inspire students to pursue careers in manufacturing. In addition, Manufacturing Days aim to change perceptions about today's manufacturing environment. BTC is collaborating with economic and workforce development partners, area school districts, and over 30 employers in Rock and Green Counties on this year's event. Curriculum for the event has been provided by the School District of Janesville.

Manufacturing Day is celebrated nationwide the first Friday in October. BTC launched its Manufacturing Day event in 2017 with approximately 500 students from Rock and Green Counties participating. BTC's event was so popular in its debut year that attendance will more than double in 2018 causing the event to be spread across two days. The college and its partners wanted to encourage as many students as possible to attend.

Therefore, this fall it is estimated that approximately 1100 from 20 area schools will experience Manufacturing Days over the two days.

Students will visit BTC's Advanced Manufacturing Training Center in Milton where they will get an overview of technical programs while touring the state-of-the-art facility. Students will also tour at least one business in the region to see demonstrations and draw attention to the outstanding opportunities that a career in manufacturing can provide.

"Manufacturing Days offer an opportunity for the next generation of our workforce to see the industry in action and learn about many well-paying careers," said Dr. Tracy Pierner, Blackhawk Technical College President. "We are grateful to our community partners who help make it possible for students in our region to see manufacturing in action right here in our communities."

Manufacturing Day is a great way to provide local students with access to manufacturers in our area who need skilled workers, and it allows students to see how Blackhawk Technical College can help them continue on their pathway of success.



at BLACKHAWK TECHNICAL COLLEGE

“Manufacturing Day events, as well as other immersion-orientated experiences, provide area high school students with a direct opportunity to incorporate employment and/or career exploration into their Academic & Career Plans (ACP's). This type of structured engagement activity, when combined with the Inspire Rock County initiative, enhances the career readiness and preparation tools that students can leverage to strengthen their ACP's,” said James Otterstein, Economic Development Manager, Rock County Development Agency.

Manufacturers (see list below) will host students, teachers, administrators and other local community members to showcase modern manufacturing technology and careers and to inspire the next generation of workers. According to manufacturingInstitute.org, more than 3.4 million manufacturing jobs will become available in the United States by 2025. Wisconsin currently has the highest percentage of manufacturing employees at 9.44% followed by Indiana at 9.08% (United States Census Bureau, 2017).

2018 participating high schools:

Albany, ARISE Virtual Academy, Beloit Learning Academy, Beloit Memorial, Brodhead, Clinton, Craig, Edgerton, Evansville, FJ Turner, Juda, Milton, Monroe, Monticello, Parker, Parkview, Rock River Charter, Rock University High School, Tagos Leadership Academy and Whitewater.

2018 participating employers:

Alliant Energy, AM Castle, Baker Manufacturing Company, Ball Corporation, Bliss Communications, Charter NEX Films, Chicago Fittings Corporation, Cotta Transmission Company, Edgerton Gear, Inc., Evonik, Frito Lay, GOEX Corporation, Impact Confections, Inc., Kuhn North America, Inc., Lanair Products, Inc., Mid-States Concrete, Monroe Truck Equipment, Morgan Corporation, MPC Inc., North American Pipe Corporation, Orchid International, Pratt Industries, Precision Drawn Metals, Precision Plus, Prent, Regal Beloit, Scot Forge Company, Seneca Foods Corporation, SSI Technologies, Inc., Stainless Tank & Equipment, Stoughton Trailers, Tigre USA, Toledo Molding & Die and United Alloy, Inc.

2018 sponsors:

Rock County 5.0, North American Pipe, Edgerton Gear, Chicago Fittings, Regal Beloit, Green County Economic Development, Kuhn N.A., Prent/GOEX, SSI, Frito Lay, Blackhawk Bank, Southwest Workforce Development Board and Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development.

Nursing students train to save lives in E.R. simulator at Blackhawk Technical College

September 26, 2018

JANESVILLE, Wis. - For nursing students, hands-on experience is essential to developing the skills they will need to save lives.

During a media tour on Wednesday at Blackhawk Technical College, at 6004 S County Rd G, some nursing students were surprised with a mock emergency, where the "lives" of three simulated patients were on the line.

The patients in the simulated operating room looked, sounded, moved and felt real, but they're weren't. They're part of a state-of-the-art technology that simulates scenarios they could encounter in the real world.

"We have multiple mannequins that are able to do things that real patients would be able to do," said Kristy Crocker, Simulation Center Director at Blackhawk Technical College. "We are able to do intubations deliver a baby, we are able to simulate the possibilities of what they might see out in the field."

On Wednesday, students stabilized a trauma patient and even helped deliver a baby.

Nursing student Briana Juszczak has participated in training several times. She says the hands-on lessons are very helpful.

"It really is like a real scenario. She gives birth, that baby is being pushed out and if you're not ready that baby is going to hit the floor. So, it's really nice, and the new baby now is moving, it's breathing, it's turning colors. You can feel the chest rise," said Juszczak of the simulated baby. "It's really incredible to be able to experience what a real person is going to do underneath you."

Instructors watched the students perform from behind a two-way mirror. Afterwards, the instructors meet with the students to discuss what they did right and what they did wrong.

"It's nice to be able to just practice before we get into the clinical site, so we were more prepared for what's coming for our patient," Juszczak said.

"These simulators are wireless, you see that they weren't plugged into anything and they're controlled by that makes them operate in that realistic fashion," said James Archetto, Vice President of Gaumard Scientific.

"There isn't a lot of publicity for the technology of these simulators, but they are actually all over the country and all over the world," Archetto said.

Every year, as many as 300 students participate in Gaumard Scientific's simulations. Blackhawk also offers it to paramedics, firefighters, and hospitals.

Students at CVTC Participate in 9/11 Memorial Stair Climb

September 12, 2018

Chippewa Valley Technical College Students are honoring fallen 9/11 firefighters and other emergency responders by running up flights of stairs.

The aim is to recognize the struggle first responders underwent when trying to rescue the victims of 9/11.

341 firefighters and two paramedics who responded to the World Trade Center in New York City died.

Tuesday CVTC students training to join the same occupation as those brave men and women honored their sacrifice by running up and down these stairs on campus.

The students ran up and down the stairs 37 times to mark the more than 100 flights of stairs in the World Trade Center.

CVTC Instructional assistant Christina Henke says students are taking time from their normal fitness class to honor the fallen.

“Instead of the full 110 flights of stairs, which we don't have access to, their going up the full splash wall here 37 times and back down,” explained Henke.”

Henke says it's good for anyone to remember those who died on 9/11 but especially for those going on to be firefighters or EMS to understand the sacrifices made that day.

“We have a nice breeze today but it is pretty warm and the intensity on the legs is going to be pretty tough,” Henke added. “There's going to be a lot of quads burning but the idea is not only to feel the physical pain but it will also prepare them for physical testing at the end of their class.”

CVTC also says students decided to run silent out of respect saying they wanted to honor the firefighters in a way that closer resembles the way they would have entered the building

Making Futures at Oshkosh Corporation

September 13, 2018
Wisconsin Technical College System



IN PHOTO (from left): Dr. Susan May, president, FVTC, Wilson Jones, president and CEO, Oshkosh Corporation, Mary Tyler, chair of the WTCS Board, and Dr. Morna Foy, president of the WTCS.

Oshkosh Corporation Earns Futuremaker Award from FVTC

The Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) Board and Fox Valley Technical College (FVTC) honored Oshkosh Corporation on Tuesday evening with a 'Futuremaker Partner' award. The partners not only collaborate to provide skills education for FVTC program students and experienced company employees, they are innovating to expand workforce participation in the region.

"Oshkosh Corporation impacts the safety and wellbeing of so many people, locally and worldwide," says Dr. Susan May, president of Fox Valley Technical College. "The company has partnered with us in a number of strategic capacities for many years, and its support of our core mission runs the gamut from financial assistance to our Foundation, to workplace training programs for its employees, and even collaborating to boost the region's labor pool through a variety of workforce development initiatives," May said. "Honoring Oshkosh Corporation with the Futuremaker Partner award exemplifies an innovative private-public partnership that is vital to our local economy."

The company routinely relies on FVTC to enhance the skills of its existing workforce in areas including fire training, truck driving and safety. The partners are now working together on a "GED to Work" program that will expand workforce participation throughout the Fox Valley by reaching people without a high school diploma, providing an opportunity for them to earn their GED on the way to a great career.

"On behalf of our diverse and global workforce, Oshkosh Corporation is honored to receive this award," said President and Chief Executive Officer Wilson Jones. "Fox Valley Technical College is a world-class leader when it comes to growing the economy through education and training. I know first-hand how its business and industry team has helped Oshkosh Corporation and Pierce Manufacturing turn a quick training need around in no time. In addition, the college's agility and the expertise of its people aid us in producing outcomes that impact thousands of people worldwide."

In addition to working with FVTC to provide training for its existing workforce, Oshkosh Corporation makes it a priority for its employees to serve on the college's invaluable advisory committees, creating and modifying curriculum for programs from manufacturing technology to welding, business management to professional communications. The company's willingness to make available staff's time and expertise ensures the college provides relevant education for students.

"Oshkosh Corporation's close partnership with FVTC makes certain that students learn exactly what they need to have success in the workplace," said Wisconsin Technical College System Board President S. Mark Tyler. "This is typical of our colleges' employer partnerships in every economic sector, which provide incredible value for students, employers and the state's economy," Tyler said. Beyond the training partnership, Oshkosh Corporation has provided generous in-kind donations of equipment and material to the college to assure students are learning on the latest equipment, as well as critical financial support for FVTC

students that includes scholarships for future public safety professionals and lead donor status for the college's 'Promise Scholars' program.

Seminar on Food Exports Being Planed for September 19

September 11, 2018
Wisconsin Ag Connection

The Food Export Association of the Midwest and the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection is organizing a seminar next week in Appleton to share information on market research and pricing food products for export.

It's called 'Food Export: Tools of the Trade,' which takes place at **Fox Valley Technical College** on September 19. The program will be led by Dennis Lynch, a food export helpline counselor who has been directly involved in monitoring, troubleshooting and facilitating export transactions for more than 25 years.

Other topics during the day include shipping your product overseas, export payments and finance, the status of ag exports, and programs and services of the Food Export Association of the Midwest.

"Information to be shared will benefit both the new-to-export company, as well as the experienced food exporter," said DATCP Economic Development Consultant Lisa Stout. "The seminar will focus on a wide range of products that you will find on the grocery store shelves, as well as in a restaurant kitchen."

The cost is \$50 per person. For more information or to register, call 608-224-5126.



August 23, 2018

Report: Gateway and its students add more than \$886 million to local economy

Taxpayers receive \$2.40 return for every \$1 of public money invested in college

Gateway Technical College and its students added a \$886 million impact to the Gateway Technical College District economy, or about equal to 4.1 percent of the region's gross regional product, a recent economic survey indicated.

In addition, for every \$1 of public money invested in Gateway, taxpayers receive a cumulative return of \$2.40 in the form of higher tax receipts and public sector savings, the report indicated.

This survey was part of a sweeping report of the college's impact on the economy, taxpayers, its students and the state conducted by Emsi, a national labor market and economics analytics company.

"Gateway students and staff demonstrate their value in many ways," said Gateway Technical College CEO and President Bryan Albrecht. "This report highlights the important financial impact Gateway has on sustaining our regional economy.

"Recognizing the investments made by our taxpayers and students is critical to our future, and returning a positive economic impact is one way we measure our college success."

The report reveals that the college is part of the economic backbone of the region. It shows the college's strong impact on the economy and tax base of Southeastern Wisconsin as well as the long-lasting impact a Gateway education has on its graduates and the economy.

While the report took a look at the lifelong impact of the college's education on its students and the area economy, it also focused specifically on the 2016-17 year for other specific data.

Key findings include:

- Taxpayers see an annual return of 6.7 percent on their investment in Gateway.
- The accumulated contribution of former students now employed in the regional workforce amounted to \$792 million in added income during the analysis year.
- Gateway's 2016-17 students will receive an average annual rate of return of 26 percent on their investment in college, which will continue throughout their working lives.
- On average, Gateway's 2016-17 students will receive a cumulative \$7.30 in higher future income for every \$1 they invested in their education.
- Overall, one out of every 16 jobs in the Gateway District is supported by the activities of Gateway and its students.
- By the end of the working careers of students enrolled in 2016-17, the state will have collected a present value of \$165.9 million in added taxes.
- Associate degree completers on average will see an increase of \$10,200 per year over their working lifetime compared to someone with a high school diploma, a total estimated increase of \$387,600.
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- For every dollar of public money invested in Gateway, taxpayers receive a cumulative value of \$2.40 over the course of the students' working lives.

The report also indicated societal impact of the college and concluded that for every dollar society invested in Gateway, "society as a whole in the state of Wisconsin will receive a cumulative value of \$11.50 in benefits."

Re-entry Employment Expo helps find employment opportunities for former inmates

October 2, 2018



Larry Luckett and two other inmates from the Sturtevant Dept of Corrections facility were on hand to serve food at an expo aimed at finding jobs for former inmates Tuesday morning. It was hosted by Gateway Technical College.

At the age of 35, Aaron Lane is getting a chance to do “grown-up stuff” for the first time.

Lane, who grew up in Milwaukee County, was convicted of armed robbery when he was 17 years old and was sentenced to 19 years in prison. In March, Lane was transferred to the Kenosha Correctional Center, where he had access to a work-release program for the first time.

Since July, he has been working through the correctional center’s work-release program at Fair Oaks Farms LLC in Pleasant Prairie, a meat processing plant that makes sausage and other products.

“It’s my first job as an adult,” Lane said, adding he has been earning his first paychecks, building up savings, and is looking forward to filing taxes for the first time. “I can’t say it

was easy; it was challenging, but not too challenging ... and I do like it.”

He said he hopes to stay on the job at Fair Oaks after he is released next year.

On Tuesday, Lane was one of several inmates working at the Southeast Wisconsin Re-entry Employment Expo. The event, held at Gateway Technical College’s Horizon Center, 4940 88th Ave., sought to link area employers with the agencies that work with people striving to re-enter society after spending time in prison.

For employers who are struggling to find workers in a tight labor market, the expo was an opportunity to learn about available re-entry service programs that can help match employers with people ready to work.

About 150 people turned out for the opening of the event at 7:30 a.m., so many that all the parking spaces at the Horizon Center were full.

Providing opportunity

District Attorney Michael Graveley worked to organize the event in Kenosha County after learning about a similar re-entry fair held in St. Francis in May. Although he has spent his career as a prosecutor, Graveley said he feels that the justice system needs to provide opportunity as well as punishment.

“It’s my feeling that if you are truly going to use the word ‘justice’ ... you have to have real opportunities available for people once they’ve paid their dues,” he said.

Graveley said that providing former inmates help finding work and stability after prison not only helps those individuals, but also helps create safer communities.

The expo included support programs like Racine-Kenosha Vocational Ministry — which provides counseling, job training and support services to people when they leave prison — to organizations like the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership-Big Step, which connects people to training and careers in the building trades.

The employment support specialists who coordinate the work-release program at the Kenosha Correctional Center were also there, hoping to meet more employers willing to consider the program. Of the KCC’s 123 inmates, 73 are in work-release.

One of the employers at the expo was Meg King, human resources director for LMI Packaging Solutions in Pleasant Prairie.

King said the company, which has about 75 employees, has had difficulty in the tight labor market finding workers. She said they learned of the work-release program at the Kenosha Correctional Center accidentally when one of their existing workers ended up

being incarcerated. She said that worker continued to work for LMI through the work-release program, then stayed with the company once his prison sentence was complete.

Transportation service

King said one of the biggest benefits of the work-release program is its transportation service. Inmates are dropped off and picked up for work by a van provided by the correctional center.

“That’s our biggest obstacle (to finding employees) right now, transportation,” King said.

She said there is no public transportation to LakeView Corporate Park, and access to reliable vehicles is difficult for low-income workers.

King said the company does not see a barrier to hiring people with past criminal convictions, although they do opt not to hire people with certain criminal histories, including sex offenders.

“My grandfather started a business 52 years ago and he always talked about giving people second chances,” she said. “We don’t think that a person’s past has to be a barrier to their future.”

The expo was sponsored by Kenosha County, the Archdiocese of Milwaukee Office for Urban Ministry, the Kenosha Area Business Alliance, the Kenosha Unity Coalition, the Racine/Kenosha Vocational Ministry, Racine Area Manufacturers and Commerce, Racine County and the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of Wisconsin.

DWD Awards Dual Enrollment Training Grant to
Lakeshore Technical College
*Dual enrollment training provides tech college training
to high school teachers*

October 8, 2018

The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) has awarded a Wisconsin Fast Forward (WFF) Dual Enrollment Grant to Lakeshore Technical College in the amount of \$255,000.

New program standards require technical colleges to match the quality and integrity of dual enrollment programs with credits offered at the institution, including the credentials of high school instructors who teach dual enrollment courses.

LTC's grant will cover training a minimum of 63 high school teachers toward certification of Higher Learning Commission Dual Enrollment standards. LTC will work with teachers from eight school districts in their service area.

Thirty-two teachers will receive master's level credits toward HLC certification for teaching dual enrollment in general studies courses. Course Competencies for career and technical education instruction will be offered in approximately 45 unique courses representing business and technology, agriculture, manufacturing, and health educational areas.

"Students who complete college credits while in high school are more likely to enroll in college and, once enrolled, do better than their peers who did not earn college credits in high school. This funding will make sure high school students have long-term access to earning college credits taught right in their high school by the teachers they know best," said LTC President Dr. Paul Carlsen.

The Wisconsin Fast Forward program encourages increased collaboration between Wisconsin's workforce, employers, local or regional economic development organizations, workforce development boards, post-secondary institutions and private training providers to develop and execute business-led training programs.

For students, dual enrollment provides Wisconsin's youth the opportunity to earn college credit while still in high school, a cost and time saver for Wisconsin's families. Students that are able to take on college-level courses while in high school are better prepared for the rigor of post-secondary education.

"Governor Walker's Wisconsin Fast Forward program is investing in high school teachers, ensuring innovative dual enrollment programs continue to prepare students for high-demand jobs in growing industries," said DWD Secretary Ray Allen. "This funding supports students' access to post-secondary education while still in high school, accelerating their transition into the workforce and reducing the cost of receiving a higher education."

A total \$3.6 million was awarded to 14 technical colleges that will serve 209 school districts and more than 1,000 high school teachers across Wisconsin. These teachers will be trained or certified in their area technical college's relevant subject areas.

Madison College Chef Series reveals new celebrity host



September 25, 2018

Top chefs will inspire and educate the next generation of culinary artists.

Food expert and television host, Kyle Cherek, will be the celebrity host for the **Madison College Chef Series** starting October 2018.

According to the release, for 10 seasons, Cherek has introduced audiences to food production and preparation throughout the state on his Emmy Award-winning television program, “Wisconsin Foodie.”

“Kyle has introduced people to the many opportunities surrounding the food industry in the state,” said Chef Paul Short, director of the **Madison College** Culinary Arts program. “Our students need to know the various paths they can follow with this degree.”

For three years, the Chef Series has introduced Culinary Arts students and foodies to local and regional chefs who share their entrepreneurial journey and cooking techniques, according to the release.

The new season of the Chef Series will start on Tuesday, Oct. 23, from 6 p.m. – 8 p.m. in the Demonstration Kitchen at the Truax Campus.

Western's Experience 2025 Focuses On Every Student, Every Day

September 21, 2018

Western Technical College announced this week the launch of a new college-wide strategic plan, Experience 2025, aimed at improving overall student success at Western.

The plan was developed over the last year with input from Western staff, students, and local employers. It builds upon the previous strategic plan, Vision 2020, which included a \$79.8 million referendum to create facilities that represent current and future workplace environments.

With updated facilities in place, the college's focus is shifting to the student experience and four strategic directions: first choice service; workforce and community engagement; equity, inclusion and support; and employee engagement. Goals for the next seven years include an improvement in student satisfaction, stronger integration of program students with the community and regional employers, elimination of achievement gaps for African American, Hispanic and Native American students, and increased enrollment of underserved populations. Western remains focused on helping employers and communities thrive with talent.

"Our motto under Experience 2025 is 'every student, every day,'" said Western President Roger Stanford. "We have set aggressive high-level goals, but at the end of the day, it comes down to becoming a college that is student-ready, rather than waiting for students to be college-ready. We will meet students where they are and provide them with the services and training they need to be successful. Western is uniquely positioned to do this."

To accomplish this, Western will implement several strategies, including an improved enrollment process, innovative teaching practices, increased internship opportunities, expanded partnerships with K-12 schools, and optimized regional locations.

"I'm excited to see staff and faculty come up with creative ideas to deliver on our brand promise of the essential experience," said Stanford. "Students repeatedly tell us that it's our staff members who make the difference; that one special person who took an interest in their success. That's what we hope to create for every student, every day."

AUBURNDALE HIGH SCHOOL TO BUILD RENEWABLE ENERGY LAB



September 12, 2018

Auburndale High School was a recent winner of the America's Farmers Grow Rural Education grant funded by the Monsanto Foundation. This \$25,000 grant will be used to build a renewable energy lab in the Marleen Knutson School Forest Learning Center.

With the grant money, the school will be working with the Mid-State Technical College renewable energy program. The plans include adding solar panels, a geothermal hot water heater, a small-scale wind turbine, and a bio mass pellet stove.

"The hope is that when everything is said and done, this will be a place for a beacon of environmental sustainability to answer questions the community might

have when investing in something like this,” said Auburndale High School agriscience teacher Mark Cournoyer.

The school was one of six selected in Wisconsin for the grant. The extensive application process includes designing a project and filling out an application which is then reviewed by a panel of STEM teachers and farmers. Winning applications are selected on the merit of the application, need of the project, and support within the community.

The high school, middle school, and elementary school STEM staff that work in the district will be working together to create curriculum to coincide with the new lab. The high school already offers an alternative energy class that is a transcribed credit class, meaning students that take the class are offered college credit upon successful completion. The lab will also be available for members of the community to see either during meetings that are held at the learning center or they could set up a time to see it.

The school will be working with Mid-State planning the new lab until January and then the install will begin in March with hopes to be finished in May of 2019. There will be an official unveiling of the new lab in May 2019 at the Marleen Knutson School Forest Learning Center.

COMMERCIAL TRUCK-DRIVERS ARE IN SHORT SUPPLY, BUT MILWAUKEE IS CRANKING THEM OUT



Photo courtesy of Johnny Williams

September 9, 2018

Our economy is built on truckers, and we're starting to run out.

It wasn't until after Johnny Williams lost his job as a website designer in August 2016 that he started to actually notice all of those "DRIVE TRUCKS FOR US" advertisements plastered on semi tractor-trailers.

Williams, who is 36 and lives in Cudahy, took the bait and went back to school. He earned his Class A commercial driver's license (CDL) in two months at **Milwaukee Area Technical College's** Oak Creek campus and is set to earn more than \$55,000 in his first year behind the wheel of a big rig.

Despite a high demand for newcomers like Williams, there is still a major shortage, felt at every level of the supply chain. Delivery delays are becoming increasingly common, and it will become more noticeable when retailers and grocery stores can't stock their shelves. Amazon raised the price of its Prime subscription from \$99 to \$119 in May,

blaming rising shipping costs. Dozens of other multibillion-dollar companies have reported similar upcharges.

The nation needs at least 90,000 new truckers in the next 10 years to replace the drivers leaving the business and retiring, plus another 55,000 to resolve the scarcity, says former state Sen. Neal Kedzie, now president of the Wisconsin Motor Carriers Association. Automated driving technologies might alleviate some symptoms of the shortage but won't end it.

"They have to change the image of the truck driver," says Dan Zdrojewski, a truck driving instructor at MATC. Williams – a 5-foot-5, 165-pound, cleanshaven Honduran-American – is baffled when friends tell him that he doesn't look like a trucker; he's not sure what truck drivers are supposed to look like.

Lenient government oversight led to years of industry abuse, Zdrojewski says, as bosses placed undue stress on overworked and underpaid drivers. Pay and work conditions are getting better, but the memory remains.

"Not even other truck drivers are referring other people into this industry, because they have been so mistreated," says Zdrojewski, who is 44 and drove trucks for 20 years. And with a new, federally mandated curriculum for CDL education programs coming in February 2020, it's going to start taking longer – perhaps as much as two more weeks at MATC – to certify new drivers, according to Zdrojewski.

Stricter regulations aim to protect drivers, but even some advocates think the pendulum has swung back too far. Even if drivers want extra overtime, for example, complex hours-of-service rules set firm maximums.

"The [U.S. Department of Transportation] has to loosen up its restrictions," says Rocky Holmgren, vice president of West Allis-based Transport Services. "It's devastating to the industry. ... As long as [the driver] gets eight hours of sleep, who cares?" Even newly minted driver Williams has already seen over-regulation. "That's half of the reason why we're short. Some of the trucking rules are just ridiculous," he says.

Williams doesn't plan to be a trucker forever. But for now, he's happy with good wages, benefits, job security and listening to podcasts as he traverses Wisconsin in his big rig. "It can be a career, or a stepping stone to something else," he says. "Once you get a CDL Class A, then you can drive basically any vehicle." He laughs and adds: "Shy of being a pilot or a captain on a cruise liner."

I've got a golden ticket

Driver's Ed looks a little different at MATC.

The truck driving course is maxed at 12 students, whose median age is 38, far from pimply pubescence. Those who survive the eight-week, 320-hour intensive course almost certainly get a job.

"Everybody is hiring," says Dan Zdrojewski, one of the program's two lead educators. "The CDL is often known as the golden ticket. You take care of that golden ticket, it's going to take care of you."

The class costs just under \$3,000. Thanks to a scholarship, Johnny Williams paid only a few hundred bucks. To enroll, all you need is a high school diploma, clean drug test, and driver's license, and you have to pass the one-week permit class.

Upon opening in fall 2013, MATC's truck driving program had trouble finding students. One session even got canceled last year. Now there's a waitlist to get in.

Milwaukeean Pancho Villa, 23, earned his CDL from the program in July. (Yes, it's his real name, right there on his license.) He had several offers within a week.

"It's easier to get a job [with a CDL] than with a bachelor's degree or something," Villa says. "Seeing semis on the road, I was like, 'Oh I want to do that.'"

Now he can.

Ribbon Cutting and Open House at MATC Oct. 17 to Spotlight New CNC Swiss Machinery and Expanded Instructional Capacity



The event at MATC's Downtown Milwaukee Campus is open to the public and will include live cutting demonstrations on the school's new, highly advanced CNC machinery.

October 1, 2018

Milwaukee Area Technical College will hold a free, public open house Wednesday, Oct. 17, from 3-7 p.m. in Room T129 in the T Building, 1101 N. 6th St., to introduce area students, educators, manufacturers and community leaders to its new CNC Swiss Lab. A ribbon cutting and formal program will be held at 4 p.m. MATC recently added new state-of-the-art equipment to enhance training for its CNC (computer numerical control) Swiss machine tool operations classes. Six new Tsugami precision machine tools were purchased and installed at MATC's Downtown Milwaukee Campus in recent months.

According to Dorothy Walker, interim dean of MATC's School of Technical and Applied Sciences, the college expanded its capacity for Swiss CNC training this fall in response to a growing need from local employers for CNC Swiss machine

programmers, setup technicians and operators. MATC is the only technical college in Wisconsin that offers a full technical diploma in CNC Swiss machining.

“Manufacturers used to rely on manually operated screw machines,” said Walker. “With the advent and adoption of CNC Swiss machines, manufacturers can rapidly produce complicated parts with high accuracy and repeatability, increasing their production capabilities and ability to compete for business locally and globally. We have been offering training on CNC Swiss machines for some time, but we wanted to be able to serve more students and upgrade equipment to ensure that our students would be learning on the newest technology.”

CNC Swiss Turning Technical Diploma Extends Beyond Machining Basics

The two-semester program called “Machine Tool Operations: CNC Swiss Turning Setup and Operation” extends beyond machining basics, providing hands-on training on Tsugami Swiss type CNC lathes, highly accurate machines commonly employed in the production of small, precision parts ranging from household hardware and plumbing supplies to medical, dental, aerospace and automotive components, among others.

To enhance its already robust program that provides a technical diploma and readily employable skills, MATC purchased the new Tsugami precision machine tools from Morris Midwest, a full-service regional machine tool distributor with offices in Waukesha, Wis.; Roselle, Ill., and Maple Grove, Minn. Machine models include the Tsugami S205 20 mm Swiss type CNC lathe with five cutting axes; the SS207-5AX 20 mm Swiss type CNC lathe with seven cutting axes including a B-axis for complex machining and contouring, and the BW209Z 20 mm Swiss type CNC lathe with nine cutting axes. Morris Midwest, a division of Morris Group, Inc., installed the machinery at MATC’s Downtown Milwaukee Campus.

According to Chris Chomicki, MATC machine tool instructor, one of the reasons the college considered the Tsugami brand is because of the dual gang tooling configuration of the machines, a helpful feature when conducting two classes in conjunction with one another. A second attractive feature was the flexibility to convert the machines from typical Swiss type bar fed operation to conventional work holding mode with an optional chucker kit. Morris Midwest’s reputation as a trusted supplier was an added factor in the school’s decision to purchase the globally recognized Tsugami brand.

Instruction in CNC Swiss turning at MATC takes students through the steps of setting up and programming a machine. Students begin the learning process by editing virtual programs on tablets and progress to programming the machines for live cutting. Students who successfully complete the two-semester program obtain a technical diploma that can be applied to further study at MATC.

“We’re thrilled that MATC chose to install Tsugami CNC precision machine tools at the school,” said Corey B. Johnson, president, Morris Midwest. “Working with area manufacturers as we do, we’re aware of the need for skilled CNC programmers and machinists and are honored to support workforce development in partnership with MATC. Specialized skills in CNC Swiss turning are a valuable asset for anyone seeking employment in metal cutting.”

For more information about MATC and the open house on Oct. 17, visit www.matc.edu, and call (414) 297-6815 or email schroeml@matc.edu. To register for the open house, visit <https://cncswiss.eventbrite.com>.

For more information about Morris Midwest, visit www.morrismidwest.com, call 414-586-0450 or email info@morrismidwest.com.

MORAINE PARK ENTERS PARTNERSHIP WITH NASA CONSORTIUM



Moraine Park Technical College has been named as part of NASA's Wisconsin Scholarship Grant Consortium (WSGC), becoming one of only two technical colleges in the state to be a part of this elite group.

NASA's WSGC exists to promote aerospace-related science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education and to incentivize participation in the state's aerospace workforce. As a member, Moraine Park will have access to unique research, scholarship and fellowship grant programs, and internship and program development support. Students and faculty will also have opportunities to directly engage with research programs at NASA centers around the country through internships, co-ops, faculty visit programs, and the NASA Ambassadors program. NASA's WSGC consists of 40 different entities, including businesses, government, and colleges, all of whom have a shared interest in cultivating the future of aerospace and STEM education.

Current Moraine Park programs that will qualify under the NASA WSGC are Electromechanical Technology, Mechanical Design Technology, Process Engineering Technology – Industrial/Manufacturing, Process Engineering Technology – Quality Assurance, and CNC/Tool and Die Technologies. Further program development is expected to offer more opportunities for more programs at Moraine Park in the future.

“This is still new territory for us, but we are excited for the opportunity to collaborate with NASA and find unique learning opportunities for our students,” said Marcia Arndt, associate dean of manufacturing at Moraine Park. “The sky is the limit for our students, now more than ever.”

Currently, NASA’s WSGC is offering up to \$2,000 for a 2018-19 undergraduate scholarship to support outstanding undergraduate students pursuing aerospace, space science, or other interdisciplinary space-related studies. Current Moraine Park student enrolled in one of the five qualifying programs are encouraged to apply. Application deadline is October 2, with award announcement on November 30.

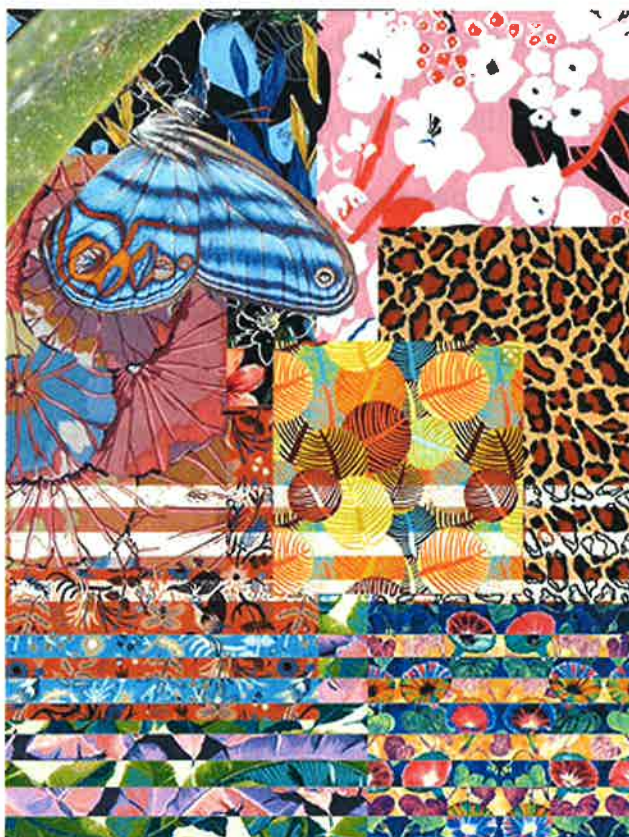
“This opportunity not only opens doors for Moraine Park, but also for our communities. I am proud to be an extended part of NASA’s future,” said Dr. Bojan Ljubenko, director of institutional effectiveness at Moraine Park. “I look forward to exploring this program and what it will bring to the future of Moraine Park.”

For more information on the NASA WSGC program, reach out to Dr. Bojan Ljubenko by calling (920) 924-3229 or email bljubenko@morainepark.edu.

Northern National Art Competition exhibit runs through Nov. 9

October 1, 2018

One of the premier art exhibits in Wisconsin is currently on display in the **Nicolet College Art Gallery** with the 31st annual rendition of the Northern National Art Competition.



“Top contemporary artists from across the country submitted works for this juried competition,” said Nicolet College Gallery Director Katy Ralph. “Only the finest pieces were selected, resulting in an amazing collection that rises to a very high standard.”

The event is co-sponsored by the Northern Arts Council, which awards \$8,500 in prize money to artists judged to have created the best works.

This year’s judge was Mark Steven Greenfield, former director of the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery.

Greenfield pored over 409 images submitted by more than 200 artists from across the country, selecting the best 92 pieces for the exhibit.

“I feel it is vitally important that national and regional aesthetics both be recognized and celebrated as the cultural barometers they represent, giving us a more insightful understanding of our diversity,” Greenfield wrote in his Curatorial Statement for the exhibit. “The work I’ve selected puts into visual language social and cultural imperatives the artists clearly felt could not be articulated in any other way.”

A Los Angeles native, Greenfield studied under Charles White and John Riddle at the Otis Art Institute. He received his bachelor’s degree in Art Education from California State University, Long Beach, and a master’s of fine arts degree in Painting and Drawing from California State University - Los Angeles. He also served as director of the Watts Towers Arts Center from 1993 to 2002.

His work has been exhibited extensively throughout the United States and internationally. His work deals primarily with the African American experience and in recent years has focused on the effects of stereotypes and racial politics on American culture. For more information about Greenfield, visit markstevengreenfield.com.

Admission to the exhibit is free. The Nicolet Art Gallery, located in the Northwoods Center on the Rhinelander Campus, is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. The Northern National Art Competition exhibit will run through Nov. 9.

The digital collage above, Nature’s Colors by Chicago artist Ed Derwent, is one of the many works of art on display in the exhibit.

Farm to Fork: Ginseng Apple Cider

September 14, 2018



Starting Friday, ginseng growers and fans will take part in the second year of the International Wisconsin Ginseng Festival in downtown Wausau.

Ahead of the event, the popular central Wisconsin export was featured as part of Sunrise 7's Farm to Fork segment.

Nick Sandquist, of Hsu's Ginseng in Wausau stopped by to discuss the benefits of ginseng and why Wisconsin's climate is ideal for growing the root.

Later, **Northcentral Technical College** culinary instructors Travis Teska and Jon Reinke showed off a mulled apple cider featuring cinnamon and ginseng. You can find the recipe below.

GINSENG APPLE CIDER

Ingredients:

- 2 cups fresh apple cider
- 1 cinnamon stick
- ½ vanilla bean
- 2 cloves
- 1 bottle Hsu's Shanergy drink

Directions:

In a sauce pan combine cider cinnamon, Vanilla bean, and cloves. Heat to simmer. Turn burner off and let mixture steep for 10 minutes before straining. Add Shanergy drink to strained mixture. Serve hot

NTC is also offering a scholarship to a student to continue their culinary education.

The 2nd Annual International Wisconsin Ginseng Festival kicks off at noon on Friday, Sept. 14 with events planned until Sunday, Sept. 15. WSAW is a proud sponsor of this year's event.

Welders wanted: Military work drives need for skilled workers in Wisconsin

September 11, 2018

Large metal boxes made in Wisconsin protect key gear in lower decks of the U.S. Navy's new Gerald R. Ford Class of aircraft carriers.

Workers at [Fox Valley Metal-Tech](#) produce about \$20 million worth of gear on each of the ships. The Green Bay-area business is one of more than 2,000 small and mid-sized businesses around the country working on pieces and components of the high-tech carriers.

Like many manufacturers, Fox Valley Metal-Tech faces the very real hurdle of finding enough skilled welders, limiting the company's business potential and growth.

"We're got a lot of work and a lot of orders in backlog and our biggest challenge is getting stuff out the door right now because we can't find as many people as we need to support those programs," said Kevin Gosselin, director of sales and business development at Fox Valley Metal-Tech.

NWTC: 24 classes related to welding

The need for welders has been a long-term challenge. With more complex structures being made in the area, low unemployment, baby boomer retirements, and a strong economy, the sting has become more acute in the last 18 months. "Right now, the demand for welding, and manufacturing in general, is as strong as it's been in the last seven or eight years," said Joe Draves, associate dean of manufacturing at [Northeast Wisconsin Technical College](#) in Green Bay. NWTC offers 24 classes related to welding and has a placement rate of about 95 percent for graduates who typically start out around \$18 an hour. The median wage for welders in Wisconsin is around \$40,000 a year but can exceed \$75,000.

Northeast Wisconsin Technical College holds classes from morning to night and on weekends to meet the needs of prospective employees. It's also promoting welding careers to girls and women.



A welder works on the shop floor Aug. 27 at Fox Valley Metal-Tech in Ashwaubenon. (Photo: Nathan Phelps/ USA TODAY NETWORK - Wisconsin)

Government: Supporting tech Ed

U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher, R- Green Bay, recently toured Fox Valley Metal-Tech. “I hear from manufacturers ... their biggest challenge is they cannot find people – particularly in the skilled trades, but across the board,” Gallagher said. “That is the biggest limiting factor to the growth of our economy today.” He points to this summer's reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 as an acknowledgment from the nation’s leaders that the need for skilled manufacturing workers exists. The Perkins Act provides \$1.2 billion a year to support technical education in high schools and post-secondary institutions.



Kevin Gosselin, left, and John West, right, of Fox Valley Metal-Tech explain part of a watertight door to U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher during a tour on Aug. 27. The door will be part of a U.S. Navy littoral combat ship. (Photo: Nathan Phelps/ USA TODAY NETWORK - Wisconsin)

Industry: Works closely with technical colleges

With 140 employees, Fox Valley Metal-Tech works on several military programs, ranging from ground-based anti-ballistic missile systems to Navy ships and submarines. It's work that requires sharp, hands-on skills.

"A lot of the work we do on the shop floor involves ... welding to very tight specifications," he said. "If we're welding for products on an aircraft carrier or submarine, we've got to know we have the right people who are qualified to meet the welding specifications of that job. And they're difficult to find."

In terms of finding a future workforce, the business works closely with NWTC, local high schools and the Northeast Wisconsin Manufacturing Association. It also offers in-house training and skills development for employees.

Dairy Goat Academy to attract experts in the field

September 10, 2018

In coordination with the Wisconsin Dairy Goat Association, Southwest Wisconsin Technical College in Fennimore, Wisconsin, will be hosting the Dairy Goat Academy on Sept. 28 and 29. The two-day event will include meat goat specific programming, as well as breakout sessions for dairy goat training. There will also be farm tours, a trade show and auction.



“Wisconsin leads the nation for dairy goat production, with the majority of milking goats located right here in southwest Wisconsin,” said Clare Heberlein, dairy goat herd management coordinator/instructor at Southwest Tech. “This growth in the southwest portion of the state is due in large part to Saputo having two goat cheese factories; one in Belmont and one in Lancaster, drawing goat producers to this area of the state. Saputo is the lead sponsor for our Dairy Goat Herd Management Certificate Program.”

This year’s keynote speaker is Dr. Paul Plummer, associate professor at Iowa State University. He will discuss dairy goat animal welfare, an emerging topic in the dairy goat industry.

The event will also include breakout sessions on both dairy and meat goat production, covering parasite management, marketing goat meat and cull animals, and extended lactations, among others. Hands-on sessions on goat milk

soap making and production and fecal sampling will be offered. Two virtual farm tours will be available, in addition to a traditional tour of the Gingerich Goat Dairy.

New this year is the Wisconsin Dairy Goat Association's Select Goat Sale on Saturday, Sept. 28 at 3 p.m. Ten top quality breeding animals from throughout the state will offered at the auction. Breeds to be sold include Alpine, Lamancha, Nigerian Dwarf, Oberhasli, and Toggenburg.

Additional information about the event is available at www.swtc.edu/dairygoat or by contacting Heberlein at 608-822-2723 or cheberlein@swtc.edu.

Farm to Tech event offers unique dining experience

September 18, 2018

The first-ever **Southwest Tech** Farm to Tech Table Progressive Dinner offered a unique dining experience on Sept 15. More than 100 attendees were treated to a delicious meal of local farm fresh ingredients, some grown on campus. The meal was prepared by culinary students and alumni, under the direction of Karen Bast, culinary arts/management instructor at Southwest Tech, along with Jeff Dombeck, culinary instructor.



“The entire evening went really well,” said Kim Schmelz, external relations and alumni development director. “We heard several very complimentary comments and I was really impressed with what our students accomplished with the assistance of Jeff and Karen.”

The meal was held at four locations throughout campus, allowing each area to be showcased.

Proceeds from the event supported the on-campus food pantry (Chargers Cupboard) and culinary program scholarships.

Guests included community members, retirees, local business and chamber members, as well as alumni and other friends of the college.

To learn more about Southwest Tech’s culinary programs, visit www.swtc.edu/culinary.

WCTC hosting first Early Childhood Education Career Fair amidst teacher shortage

September 25, 2018



Waukesha County Technical College will be hosting their first Early Childhood Education Career Fair.

It will take place Wednesday, October 3 as a result of Wisconsin experiencing a shortage of early childhood educators.

Representatives from more than 50 area childcare centers (originally just 15) will be on hand to share information about their programs and available positions. Resources will also be available on the College's Early Childhood Education associate degree program.

For more information on the event, click [here](#).

New strategic plan puts focus on students at Western Technical College

September 21, 2018

La Crosse, WI (WXOW) — A new strategic plan at Western Technical College aims to attract more students, keep them, and get them into the workforce during a skills shortage.

It is called Experience 2025. The motto of the new plan is 'Every Student, Every Day.' Roger Stanford, president of Western Technical College, says it is a big commitment; however, he says the key to success starts with students. The goal is to treat them right, support them, and get them to graduation.

"If we look out five, six, or seven years, I want to be really confident that we provide this unbelievable service that people can't wait to get here," said Stanford. "They can't wait to stay. They've had an amazing experience all the way, and that they're truly prepared for a job. That's what this plan is set up to do."

Stanford says this plan does not require any additional dollars to implement. Experience 2025 involves adding more innovative teaching practices and increasing internship opportunities.



La Crosse Tribune launches scholarship for Western sales, marketing students

September 28, 2018



Roger Stanford, right, president of Western Technical College, discusses how the La Crosse Tribune's new scholarship program will help sales and marketing at the school. Josh Trust, left, president and publisher of River Valley Media Group, announced the creation of the scholarship on Thursday.
[Kyle Farris, La Crosse Tribune](#)

The La Crosse Tribune on Thursday announced the creation of a scholarship for sales and marketing students at Western Technical College — a move that will help keep students on track to graduate, and that will likely lead to internship and job opportunities at the Tribune.

“It’s an amazing opportunity to be able to give back to local students who are starting or furthering their careers at a wonderful institution that’s right in our backyard,” said Josh Trust, president and publisher of River Valley Media Group, which includes the Tribune.

“For this region, one of the biggest issues we all face is workforce development,” Trust said. “It’s no different for us. Hopefully, by getting us exposed to the great work being done by students, it will lead to internships and full-time employment opportunities that will keep students in the La Crosse area once they graduate.”



Josh Trust, president and publisher of River Valley Media Group, talks with Western Technical College's Pam Culver and Mike Swenson on Thursday, after announcing the La Crosse Tribune's new scholarship for sales and marketing students. [Kyle Farris, La Crosse Tribune](#)

The Tribune's gift includes five \$1,000 scholarships that will be divided among students in Western's marketing management, digital marketing and sales management programs.

Trust said he hopes to renew that commitment annually, which is welcome news to leaders of the technical college.

"Anytime we can get a scholarship that provides a better pathway for our students to start or finish their education ... that's great," said Western President Roger Stanford. "We like all scholarships — \$100 ones, \$200 ones. But a \$1,000 scholarship changes the entire game. This is really a major impact."



Josh Trust, president and publisher of River Valley Media Group, shakes hands with Roger Stanford, president of Western Technical College, Thursday morning at the Lunda Center. Trust announced that the La Crosse Tribune is launching a scholarship program for sales and marketing students at Western.

[Kyle Farris, La Crosse Tribune](#)

Mike Swenson, executive director of Western's Foundation, said scholarships like this one can be the difference between a student graduating or, potentially, being forced to drop out.

Not only will this scholarship give students a much-needed financial boost, he said, it will also set them up for a fulfilling, well-paying career.

"A lot of students we serve are working a lot of hours outside of their education, maybe a couple part-time jobs just to survive school," Swenson said. "Now, we're talking about taking one of those students and moving them into a professional position at the La Crosse Tribune. It's a life-changing experience for the student, and it could all be because they applied for the La Crosse Tribune scholarship."

WITC Welding Student Determined to Succeed Despite Limited Hearing Ability

September 10, 2018

SUPERIOR - A welding student at the Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College (WITC) campus in Superior is proving he can be successful despite having very limited hearing.

In John Palmer's welding class you'll find students hard at work. One of them is Zachrey Gill, who became deaf at 7 months old, therefore he is only able to detect loud noises.



"My first thoughts were that I would not be able to teach a deaf student because of no language skills," said WITC welding instructor John Palmer. And it wasn't an easy task for Zachrey either.

He spoke to us through his interpreter saying at first being in class was awkward, but now he feels right at home.

"At first I was kind of nervous, you know looking around, but I was like, 'I can do it, I can do it' I was telling myself to my mom I was a little bit nervous, my mom's like, 'you can do it, you can do it' just keep going and I got that confidence, and

now I feel used to it, I'm comfortable here,' " said Zachrey through his interpreter. Palmer credits Zachrey's strong desire to learn for the change.

"Zach sets just an outstanding example of diligence, determination, and stick-to-it-ive-ness," said Palmer.

And he says there's nothing better than seeing Zachrey's confidence build right before his eyes.

"To see him be able to work within a group setting, to be able to understand the blueprints that we're using, the terminology we're using, put all those pieces together, and learn just like any other student, it's very rewarding for me personally, and for him to see that he can do just what any other student can do," said Palmer.

And now Zachrey himself hopes to inspire others in his position.

"I really believe to the world is my message that deaf people can be very successful," said Zachrey through his interpreter.

Zachrey is the third deaf student in the last four years that has been in the welding program at the WITC campus in Superior. They are expecting another one this coming January.

Wisconsin medical molder plans \$18M expansion



Nolato saw more than \$200 million in global medical sales in 2017.

Medical molder Nolato Contour will add 27,000 square feet to its Baldwin, Wis., facility as part of a \$17.9 million project expected to create 62 jobs during the next three years.

The expansion calls for two additional clean rooms and space for material handling and warehousing at the U.S. division of Nolato Medical, which is part of Sweden's Nolato AB.

Formerly known as Contour Plastics, the business was founded in 1990 and sold to Nolato in 2010. Based in Torekov, Sweden, Nolato molds thermoplastics, silicone and thermoplastic elastomers for the medical, auto, telecommunications and some industrial markets at operations in Europe, Asia and North America.

Nolato Contour molds and assembles plastic and silicone components and devices for U.S. medical and pharmaceutical companies. The Baldwin plant, which has about 160 employees, is the group's first U.S. facility.

"Nolato Contour is highly focused on our customers, and they have responded with significant long-term increases in demand," Russ Steele, president and managing director for the company, said in a news release. "We have chosen to

increase our capacity in Baldwin because of Wisconsin's positive business climate and great workforce."

The state has "work-ready" engineering graduates from the University of Wisconsin, **Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College** and Chippewa Valley Technical College, Steele added.

With estimated sales of \$44 million, Nolato Contour ranks 148th among North American injection molders, according to *Plastics News* data.

"We greatly appreciate the efforts of the Wisconsin Economic Development Corp. to assist in building capacity in Wisconsin," Steele said.

WEDC has authorized up to \$250,000 in state income tax credits over the next three years. The actual amount of the tax credits is contingent on the number of jobs created and the amount of capital investment during that period.

"A vital local economy grows when local businesses invest in the community," Tracy Carlson, administrator and clerk-treasurer of the Village of Baldwin, said in the release. "Baldwin applauds Nolato Contour for continuing to be a partner and leader in economic growth in our community. This expansion is exciting for our community and local workforce."

Nolato reported 2017 operating profit of 763 million Swedish krona (\$84.5 million) on sales of 6.7 billion krona (\$761 million). The medical division saw sales of 1.9 billion krona (\$216.5 million).

Burn trailer offers real-life training scenario

September 7, 2018



Instead of sleeping in, volunteer firefighters from Solon Springs kicked off their Labor Day weekend by suiting up and battling flames in the **Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College** burn trailer Saturday, Sept. 1.

"The teamwork, the camaraderie, the adrenaline, all of that stuff comes into play for this," firefighter Tom Davidson said.

In 2017, the department responded to 160 calls — 29 of them fires. Training is key, Fire Chief Jonathon Brostowitz said.

"We train like crazy," he said. "This year, we had live burn training and we had extrication training, ladders, ropes, debriefing on major accidents."

They've trained with Canadian National Railroad, Enbridge, Lifelight and more. "The requirement is 24 hours of training for firefighter for the year," Brostowitz said. "We supersede that."

Although firefighters don't have to attend every training, each piece makes the department stronger.

"What you put into it is what you get out of it, I guess," said Logan Sevre, who joined the department in January.

He was one of nine firefighters who extinguished flames over and over again Saturday, rescuing a downed firefighter and testing communications along the way.

When Sevre moved to Solon Springs from the Twin Cities, he was seeking a volunteer opportunity. Although he'd been involved with Habitat for Humanity in the Twin Cities, he chose an option a little closer to home.

"I live a couple of blocks away from the fire department," Sevre said. "I think it's beneficial to give back to the community you live in, especially one as small as this."

It's been a positive experience.

"Honestly, this is probably the most fun volunteer work I've ever done," Sevre said.

Like his fellow firefighters, he gave up a good chunk of his Saturday to use the live burn trailer. It offered them a chance to familiarize themselves with heat, fire, water, steam and safety tactics in a low-pressure environment, Brostowitz said. They could even critique each other and rerun scenarios to test tactics.

The burn trailer travels throughout WITC's 11-county district.

"It's never parked for long," WITC fire instructor Ryan Buhrow said.

A volunteer firefighter for Rice Lake, he sees a lot of value in the mobile prop.

"They can do real-life scenarios in there without too much danger," Buhrow said. "It's a pretty safe prop to use. We have live fire in there, but it's a controlled live fire so we don't have to worry about injuring anybody in there, but it gives them real fire training. I think it's pretty necessary, really."

The Solon Springs department has 34 volunteer firefighters, many of them younger. But some Douglas County departments are struggling.

Highland Fire Chief Ron Cairns said the department has about five active firefighters, but no emergency medical responders. He knows of at least three other Douglas County fire departments with no medical first responders, and that's a problem. It can lead to gaps in coverage and long wait times.

"In my opinion, the faster you can get there with trained people, the better," he said. "Gold Cross can only do so much."

The nearest ambulance could be in Duluth when they get a call to Highland, he said.

An increase in state testing and schooling demands are part of the reason for the decline in medical volunteers, Cairns said.

"They forget these people are volunteers," he said.

Douglas County volunteer fire departments are searching for people willing to be there for their neighbors when emergencies occur.

"I would encourage folks to do it and I would encourage folks to put as much time as you can into it, free time," Sevre said. "It's a lot of fun. You get to do stuff like this."

Departments pay for training, and volunteers back each other up.

"I don't know of any other organization that's as supportive," Cairns said.

To learn more about becoming a volunteer, talk to a local firefighter.

"When you see cars at the fire station, stop by and say, 'Hi,'" Brostowitz said.

