



THE VOICE OF ILLINOIS MANUFACTURING

tma news bulletin

GROWING THE
NEXT GENERATION
OF AMERICAN
MANUFACTURERS



tma news bulletin

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technology & manufacturing association

The Technology & Manufacturing Association (TMA) was founded in 1925 by eight small manufacturing companies who believed they could better themselves by associating with one another. Through the years, members established programs and services that would help their businesses grow and prosper, train their employees, and provide medical and retirement benefits. As a result of these efforts, TMA has grown into not-for-profit organization of precision manufacturing and supplier companies in the greater Chicago area.

TMA is governed by a Board of Directors, composed of executives from member firms. A full-time professional staff works closely with the Board, its committees and trust.

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message from the president



Dear TMA Friends,

On December 28th last year my oldest son and his wife finally delivered on a promise to his mother. Edie Rauschenberger was born and made me a grandfather. I knew for months that our daughter-in-law was pregnant, but that didn't really prepare me for the emotions of looking down at a beautiful baby girl that was my descendant. I'm still not exactly sure how to communicate the feelings I have about Edie, but it is some combination of intense pride and a new sense of responsibility. It truly is an awesome thing to think about how to

shape and share the world she is inheriting.

There are so many things I want her to have - or at least have a chance at. There are so many things I hope she can avoid and never have to deal with. There is so much that she will need to know and understand to succeed in our world today.

As I reflect on how I feel about being a grandfather and think about TMA and our efforts to recruit young people to manufacturing, I get the sense that we have a real responsibility to share the future and promise of making things. I do not know what a young woman will want to be in 20 years, but I do know that I will be a very proud grandfather if she is a producer of wealth.

In the last 70 years, America created more wealth than any civilization in history. That wealth, broadly shared, has lifted millions of people around the world out of poverty. And the cornerstone of that wealth creation was American manufacturing.

So, it is no wonder that today we approach the recruiting of young people from a perspective of self-preservation. After all, we need a workforce to survive and grow. But, I think we sometimes feel a little guilt about our need to recruit; rationalizing that if this really is a great career, why do we have to sell it?

I argue we have nothing to be bashful about. In fact, we have a responsibility to share the fact that "making chips" is a lot more important than making cheeseburgers or hazelnut lattes. We have a duty to tell people that if they want prosperity for their children and grandchildren, then we need to grow and strengthen manufacturing. And we need to say it (shout it!) not just for us, but really, most importantly, for our future as a country and for the future of the children we care about.

So, as we sharpen our recruiting skills and work to understand and engage the next generation of manufacturers, remember it is not just for us, today. It is also for the future, a future that needs a strong and growing manufacturing industry so that the Edies of America have their chance to excel, too.


Steve Rauschenberger

cover story

GROWING THE NEXT GENERATION OF AMERICAN MANUFACTURERS

For decades, American manufacturers have struggled with the issue of workforce development and the fact that there simply haven't been enough skilled and unskilled job seekers to fill current and future needs. That perceived urgency was one reason why eight manufacturers joined together in 1925 to form what today is the Technology and Manufacturing Association.

Manufacturing has gone through dramatic changes in the past 90 years, as the economy fluctuated from thriving to barely surviving and back. The latest unemployment figures show the nation at the five percent level, while frustrated manufacturers post unfulfilled "Help Wanted" ads for good paying jobs on Craigslist.

The challenge to find the right personnel is universal – and the solutions are multi-faceted. One challenge is to attract American youngsters into fields of study such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics – STEM.



Anyone who has been around babies, toddlers and preschoolers is well aware that learning, like eating, is a natural instinct – and can happen anywhere, at any time. Piquing an interest sometimes occurs inside a traditional classroom, but more often passions are stirred elsewhere – at home, at the playground, at a campground, at a museum or social events.

Every day 10,000 Baby Boomers turn 65 and prepare to leave the work force. With them, a whole generation of skilled machinists, tool and die makers, mold makers and manufacturing masters is draining.

At the same time, there are 2.5 entry-level job postings for each new four-year graduate in STEM fields, compared to 1.1 postings for each new bachelor-of-arts graduate in non-STEM fields.

Experts say STEM-based occupations are where the most in-demand jobs will be found during the second half of the 21st Century.

START 'EM YOUNG

For many manufacturers, their interest in science and engineering started when they were very young.

Induction Heat Treating's Dave Haimbaugh was the youngest of three boys when his dad took him along to work on Saturdays.

"I remember being six years old, being led into the back of the plant and being shown a basket of small gears," he said. "My dad said 'Here's your game – put these gears on these nails until you can't stand them up any higher.'"

Haimbaugh said that even so young, he figured out what he was doing wasn't a game – he was helping the family business. And he liked it.

Albert Raczynski, who founded Machined Concepts in Elgin, Illinois, points back to the countless hours he spent playing as a child with red, blue and yellow Legos as the time when his passion for designing and building projects began.

"As a five-year-old, I played with Legos on the floor until my back hurt," the 34-year-old said.

That's just two examples from among TMA members of families that started their kids very young with simple activities that stirred imaginations and created interest in science, technology, engineering and math, which eventually led to STEM-related careers.

LEGOs and other manipulative toys do seem to have lasting benefits for children that start playing with them early. In a 2001 study published in the Journal of Research in Childhood Education, researchers found that children that played with blocks "in a highly insightful manner" scored higher on standardized math tests when they reached seventh grade.

They also found children that played with LEGOs in groups tend to develop team-building social skills needed to pursue STEM careers.

STEM JOBS IN ILLINOIS

A 2014 Brookings Institute study found that in 2013, there were 5.7 million total job postings in STEM fields nationwide. Of those, 76%, or 4.4 million, required at least a bachelor's degree, and 41% or 2.3 million required less than two years experience.

The figures provided by Burning Glass also showed that STEM jobs offer a substantial salary premium – an average of \$66,123 for those requiring a BA to \$52,299 for non-STEM jobs.

The study showed the Chicago-Joliet region ranked fourth in job opening ads with 39,819 job openings. A little over 40 percent required STEM skills, listing an average market value of \$59,000 for advertised skill participants.

TMA SUPPORTS STEM

The Chicago region's TMA serves over 800 regional manufacturers that welcome job applicants trained in basic tooling and machining skills.

Not only does TMA train over 100 students each year in various in-demand manufacturing skills, the Association's Education Foundation invests time and resources each year to reach students in local schools and organizations. They are well aware that not all youngsters are born into families that encourage simple tasks that can bloom into passions in the STEM fields.

As part of the ongoing effort, in early March, TMA Education Foundation Associate Director Greta Salamando introduced

continued on page 10



"The ultimate goal of the educational system is to shift to the individual the burden of pursuing his own education. This will not be a widely shared pursuit until we get over our odd conviction that education is what goes on in school buildings and nowhere else."

~ Author John W. Gardner, Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare under President Lyndon Johnson



member profile

Teresa Beach-Shelow

Superior Joining Technologies

IT'S ALL ABOUT MANUFACTURING THE FUTURE



By Fran Eaton

Teresa Beach-Shelow was busy volunteering with two daughters' activities and developing a career in banking when her husband Thom launched a new business in their garage.

That year – 1992 – spelled dramatic change for the whole family.

Thom's knowledge of precision welding and laser technology matched up with Teresa's skills in business and finance, Superior Joining Technologies took off, and the Shelows haven't looked back.

Superior Joining is now in its 24th year, and is in the process of completing the company's fourth move - this time to a 55,000 square foot facility, 20 times larger than the family garage where it all began.

"We've bought every paper clip we've ever had," Teresa told the News Bulletin. "We didn't have a thing when we started."

Superior Joining started 2015 with 19 employees, and by the end of the year, they had 26 in their crew. They added seven new pieces of equipment for the new building, and with that, the needed new personnel.

Most of Teresa and Thom's work is in the aerospace industry, with customers as far

away as Canada and Mexico that they've drawn in via their website. While that's great for business, Teresa says she sees a real need to develop Rockford area businesses to take in more projects from the Chicago region.

"The Rockford community is 25 to 35 percent manufacturing," she said. "We're trying to grow it down the I-90 corridor to Chicago."

Teresa says she'll be able to devote more time to expanding that network – which includes the Technology and Manufacturing Association – as her focus moves on from the current time-consuming project of renovating their new building.

Teresa and Thom designed the new floor

plan themselves. The changes include moving inventory to be on site.

"We will have open offices here, a community room for regional meetings, the shop itself, and a lunch room," she pointed out during a brief tour of the new facility with TMA. "The last big project is Thom's welding booths."

In addition, Superior Joining is also preparing to offer 3-D printing in their research and development department.

All the growth and changes present a whole new set of challenges for Superior Joining, as it brings for any organization going through major expansion.

"Number one, growth is challenge. We're in a good position to grow, but success can





be a downfall to companies. We're focused on being able to manage it," Teresa said.

"Secondly, we face a big change in relocating the facility. We are figuring out how best to manage our projects and communicate efficiently among our staff," she said. "And third, we're learning how to best do sales for the new processes we're doing."

And while they'd have understandable reason to set aside community activities during this time of company growth, both Thom and Teresa continue to reach out to the community. Among numerous other civic projects, they sponsor annual dinners for Rockford area manufacturers.

"We enjoy sponsoring the Manufacturing Council Dinner," she said. "It brings the company notoriety, brings us satisfaction and helps the community."

Teresa has been president of the Northern Illinois Chapter of the Association of Women in the Metal Industries and was co-founder of Women of Today's Manufacturing. She's also the immediate past chair of Women in TMA.

After all, for Teresa, manufacturing is exciting and energizing.

"What's better than a manufacturing tour or

going to dinner with another manufacturer?" she asked.

Teresa spearheaded the creation of Manufacturing Camp, a one-week experience for 8th, 9th and 10th graders to promote industrial careers. She also established a scholarship program for the camp through the Community Foundation of Northern Illinois.

Teresa and Thom continue to volunteer, sponsoring local school clubs such as the Rockford Robotics and Flaming Monkeys, which focus on science, technology, engineering and math through robotics.

"Thom and I feel strongly about encouraging young people," she said.

That was evident during an after-school meeting at Eisenhower Middle School where Teresa and Thom volunteer to assist with coaching the robotics team.

Thom listened intently as a group of middle-schoolers discussed their latest assignment to design a mechanism for recycling trash.

"Sounds like a good idea. Maybe you could do it this way," he told the 7th and 8th graders, tapping into his experience as a manufacturer.

Teresa's past of school volunteering was evident with the quiet patience she showed with the club members' somewhat illogical, but original and creative, proposals.

"The future of manufacturing is in our young people," Teresa said. "We see our time with them as an investment in our community and manufacturing's future." ●



TMA Influences 2016 Primary Elections

PAC Backs 15 Winners in Races Across Illinois

TMA's Political Action Committee (PAC) made an impressive resurgence into the political process during the 2016 Democrat and Republican primary campaign season, picking 16 winners.

"Affecting public policy in a way that improves the climate for manufacturing is a goal of TMA's GRC," said GRC Chair Zach Mottl. "We appreciate all the financial support members of the TMA are making to grow the committee's impact in Illinois."

Based on their scores in the TMA Legislative Scorecard, as well as their answers to a TMA Candidate Questionnaire, and analysis from TMA's Government Relations Committee (GRC), the PAC supported a number of candidates for the Illinois State Senate and House of Representatives.

ILLINOIS SENATE

Angelica Alfaro (D) (Dist 2) Loss
Patricia Van Pelt (D) (Dist 5) **Win**
Michael Hastings (D) (Dist 19) **Win**
Steve Caramelli (D) (Dist 22) Loss
Dave Syverson (R) (Dist 35) **Win**
Dale Righter (R) (Dist 55) **Win**
Paul Schimpf (R) (Dist 58) **Win**

ILLINOIS HOUSE

Ken Dunkin (D) (Dist 5) Loss
Jaime Andrade (D) (Dist 40) **Win**
Fred Crespo (D) (Dist 44) **Win**
David McSweeney (R) (Dist 52) **Win**
Michael DeSutter (R) (Dist 74) Loss
Jerry Lee Long (R) (Dist 76) **Win**
Avery Bourne (R) (Dist 95) **Win**
Sarah Jimenez (R) (Dist 99) **Win**
Brad Halbrook (R) (Dist 102) **Win**
David Reis (R) (Dist 109) **Win**
Reggie Phillips (R) (Dist 110) **Win**

The TMA PAC also supported some county candidates, including DuPage County Board Chairman Dan Cronin and Kane County Board Chairman Chris Lauzen, who won his election.

TMA's Government Relations Committee invites all members to join their efforts in affecting public policy by getting involved in the GRC and pertinent political campaigns heading into the November General Election.

For more information on how to get involved, contact Dennis LaComb at dlacomb@tmailinois.org. •

Cook County Board Recognizes TMA

March 23, 2016 | Chicago

On March 23, 2016, the Cook County Board of Commissioners recognized the ongoing significance of TMA when it unanimously passed a resolution honoring our Association's 90th Anniversary.

The resolution's sponsor was Commissioner Stanley Moore of the 4th District, who spoke in recognition of the unique work TMA is doing to create job-training opportunities for residents of his district.

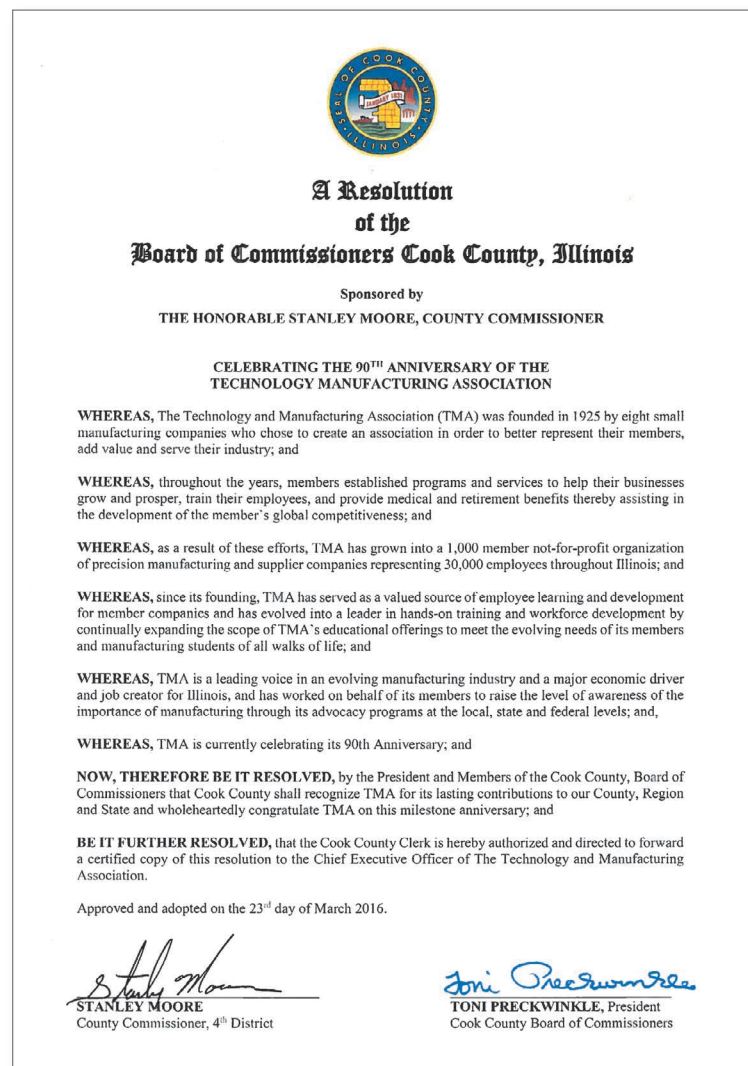
"TMA is and continues to want to be a leader in the industry in representing manufacturing as well as training a skilled workforce," Commissioner Moore said during the county board presentation. "I look forward to working with TMA to create job opportunities for those within my district."

The Commissioner went on to note TMA's work with Bethel New Life's "Advanced Manufacturing Training" (AMT) program, which teaches manufacturing skills to an average of 50 students a year. He also commended TMA's work with the Safer Foundation in training ex-offenders; and the Association's outreach to high schools and community colleges.

"TMA is honored to have been recognized by the Cook County Board of Commissioners, and looks forward to 90 more years of serving manufacturers in the Chicago area," said TMA President Steve Rauschenberger. ●

PHOTO BELOW (L-R):

Cook Co. Commissioner Stanley Moore, TMA VP & Gen. Mgr. John Rauschenberger, TMA member Greg Sweigert, TMA Gov't Relations Committee Chair Zach Mottl, Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle.



continued from page 5

Growing The Next Generation of American Manufacturers

over 450 Girl Scouts to “manufacturing” by helping them create their own bead bracelets as part of the 5th Annual STEMpalooza in south suburban Country Club Hills.

The girls, most from kindergarten through 5th grade, learned about assembling jewelry along with other STEM-related demonstrations on mechanics, robotics, chemistry and animals.

“Manufacturing is about skills. It doesn’t require a four-year degree and a mountain of debt to begin a manufacturing career. It requires hard work, dedication, and an industry certification to get the job done. And most of those certifications can be earned in two years or less,” a distributed

TMA brochure told the girls.

Then there are TMA members like Teresa Beach-Shelow and her husband Thom of Machensney Park’s Superior Joining Technologies who set aside time in their schedules to sponsor and encourage 7th and 8th graders at Eisenhower Middle School to learn more about STEM skills through a robotics club associated with FIRST LEGO League.

“We encouraged our daughters to be interested in science when they were young, and we think it’s important to keep at it with this next generation,” Teresa said.

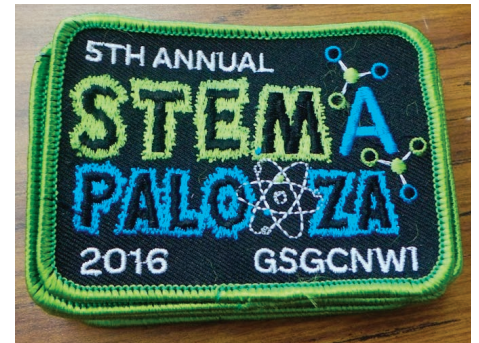
Now a nationwide effort, the FIRST LEGO League robotics program was launched in 1998. Its two founders – Dean Kamen and Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen – sought to teach middle school age students to research, build, and experiment. The process would allow students to live the entire process of creating ideas, solving problems, and

overcoming obstacles, while gaining confidence in their abilities to positively use technology.

COMPANIES INVEST IN KIDS

Even company leaders are buying into providing STEM skills for the future.

In March, Huntington Ingalls Industries, a ship manufacturer headquartered in Virginia, announced that their company’s President and CEO Mike Petters was setting up a foundation to provide



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STEMAPALOOZA 2016

educational assistance for children of the company's employees, especially focusing on STEM education programs.

Petters will be donating all but \$1 of his annual salary to the cause.

"I often speak about the importance of education," Petters said. "As a business leader and as a member of my community, I am personally and professionally committed to every segment of the education pipeline. I also believe it's my responsibility to demonstrate that commitment by investing in it. It's a long-game investment, but to keep our national economy strong and to remain competitive on the world stage, we

must invest in educating our future leaders."

STEM CAREERS ARE THE FUTURE

Manufacturing career projections have certainly taken a hit over the past few years as lower-paying assembly jobs were outsourced overseas and automation became more affordable and prevalent.

But skilled machinists, CNC operators and trained engineers continue to be in demand – and their projected respectable wages reflect the industry's urgency.

Experts suggest the answer to this dilemma is similar to the three-part solution

Americans rose as a community to meet in the past:

1. Create early in life an interest in science, technology, engineering and math,
2. Keep the interest momentum building through social clubs and fun activities, and
3. Push the next generation of manufacturers over the finish line through access to needed hands-on training and the promise of a fulfilling career.

The June 2016 edition of the News Bulletin will focus on the ideas TMA and its associates are initiating at high school and college levels to meet the nation's growing demands for STEM-related jobs. ●





TECHNOLOGY & MANUFACTURING ASSOCIATION
EDUCATION FOUNDATION
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

INVITE YOU TO THE

25th
Anniversary
Celebration

SATURDAY, MAY 14, 2016



THE DRAKE OAK BROOK HOTEL
2301 YORK ROAD, OAK BROOK
Valet parking available

TICKETS: \$125 TABLES OF 8: \$900
DRESS: COCKTAIL

RECEPTION 5:30PM | DINNER 6:30PM | DANCING TO FOLLOW

Please RSVP by Friday, May 6th
Questions: Contact Meghan Gray at 847.282.4714 or mgray@tmailinois.org

For overnight accommodations, please call 630-571-0000.
Reference "TMA Education Foundation 25th Anniversary Dinner" for special rates.
Rooms must be reserved by April 30th.

tma | events

APRIL 28

South Burbs Manufacturer's Breakfast

TMA is forming a breakfast group for manufacturing companies in the south suburban area. Please join us for this informal event, which we hope will lead to developing a larger regional network that will allow members to connect with each other.

TIME: 7:00am - 8:30am

COST: Free

LOCATION: Tinley Park, IL

MAY 10

Mayors for Manufacturing

Join manufacturers and mayors in robust discussion about issues - and solutions - facing both groups and their communities. The event includes a tour of the Prairie State College Mfg. Ctr., panel discussion, networking reception and dinner. Cook County President Toni Preckwinkle will be the keynote speaker.

TIME: 2:00pm - 6:00pm

COST: \$75/person

LOCATION: Chicago Heights, IL

MAY 10

Roundtable with TMA Chair Carr

Join other manufacturers in the Wheeling area for Happy Hour and a group discussion around relevant issues of being a manufacturer in Illinois.

TIME: 5:30pm - 7:00pm

COST: Free

LOCATION: Wheeling, IL

MAY 12

Lunch & Tour: Pneu-Fast

Pneu-Fast Co. manufactures collated nails and staples for use in name brand pneumatic tools. Originally founded as Chester Brothers Mfg., Pneu-Fast now operates from its 40,000 sq. ft. plant in Evanston, Illinois.

TIME: 11:30am - 1:30pm

COST: \$35

LOCATION: Evanston, IL

tma | april calendar sponsor

Mazak

MAY 12

Precision Machining Competition

One of TMA's most significant events, this competition is one of the most effective initiatives for career recruitment into precision metalworking. Sponsorships available.

TIME: 5:00pm - 7:30pm

LOCATION: TMA Schaumburg, IL

MAY 14

TMA Education Foundation 25th Anniversary Dinner

The TMA Education Foundation is celebrating 25 years identifying, training and engaging the next generation of manufacturers. Join fellow TMA members in commemorating the occasion and honoring the members and donors who have made the work of the Foundation possible.

TIME: 5:30pm - 11:30pm

COST: See Invite (Left)

LOCATION: Oak Brook, IL

MAY 20

TMA Golf Outing

Join fellow manufacturers, TMA members, and golfers for a day of networking on the links. The outing will take place at the Bartlett Hills Golf Club, and includes 18 holes, lunch and prizes.

TIME: 7:30am - 3:30pm

COST: \$140/person

LOCATION: Bartlett, IL

MAY 26

TMA Related Theory Graduation

Join TMA Related Theory students in celebrating their graduation from the program. The ceremony and celebration dinner will take place at The Stonegate in Hoffman Estates.

TIME: 5:30pm - 9:00pm

COST: \$80 (dinner included)

LOCATION: Hoffman Estates, IL

JUNE 9

Lunch & Tour: Frain Industries

Frain Industries has been the leading provider of certified, pre-owned packaging and processing equipment since 1981. Based in Carol Stream, IL, Frain Industries fulfills 1,200 successful projects per year offering a variety of solutions.

TIME: 11:30am - 1:30pm

COST: \$35/person

LOCATION: Carol Stream, IL

tma | new members

American Chartered Bank

Lake Zurich

www.americanchartered.com

CLS Enterprises

Mokena, IL

www.cls-ent.com

Comcast Business

Oak Brook, IL

www.businesscomcast.com

Innovative Components

Schaumburg, IL

www.knobsource.com

Integrative Systems, Inc.

Itasca, IL

www.integrative-systems.com

M-Wave International, LLC

Glendale Heights, IL

www.mwave.com

Micromatic Spring & Stamping Co., Inc.

Addison, IL

www.micromaticspring.com

NJC Machine Company

Lyons, IL

www.njcmachine.com

Plymouth Tube/Chicago Processing

Chicago, IL

www.plymouth.com

Wipfli, LLP

Tinley Park, IL

www.wipfli.com

TMA - BSI

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TMA Benefit Services, Inc. (TMA-BSI) is the only insurance agency in Illinois that is owned by the manufacturing community. A full service insurance agency, TMA-BSI can meet the unique needs of manufacturers.

To find out more, contact Brian Wohlfeil at bwohlfeil@tmaillinois.org or 847.993.2122.

tma | training

APRIL - JUNE

INTRODUCTION TO MANUAL MACHINING



This course will introduce the concepts and capabilities of a manual lathe, mill, grinder, and drill press. Students will understand and develop the fundamental machining skills needed for industry.

Course content includes:

MANUAL MILL

- Cutter shanks & arbors
- Endmills
- Trimming the machine head
- Holmaking operations
- Squaring a block

MANUAL LATHE

- Facing and turning
- Filing and polishing
- Center/spot drilling
- Thread cutting with taps and dies

GRINDER

- Mounting the grinding wheel
- Angle places, V-blocks, and collet blocks
- Wheel dressing

DRILL PRESS

- Speeds and feeds
- Center/spot drilling
- Reaming
- Counterboring and spot facing

DATES: M/W, 5/2 – 8/24

TIME: 6:00pm – 9:00pm

REGISTER: education@tmaillinois.org
or 847-825-1120

APRIL 2016

Basic Blueprint Reading

4/30 & 5/7 | 8:00am – 4:00pm

This 16-hour introductory program explains the importance of engineering drawings in manufacturing and describes how drawings are portrayed and information communicated.

MAY 2016

Introductory CNC Training (Level 1)

Mondays & Wednesdays, 5/2 – 8/24 | 6:00pm – 9:00pm

This NIMS-accredited program combines theory and hands-on training in setup, operation, and programming of a CNC mill and CNC lathe.

Intermediate Swiss CNC

Mondays & Wednesdays, 5/2 – 6/27 | 6:00pm – 9:00pm

This new course will focus on more advanced concepts related to Swiss-type machining. Students will learn complete part processing in this hands-on, project-based class.

Comprehensive GD&T

5/7, 5/14 & 5/21 | 8:00am – 3:00pm

This course will bring all participants to an operational level of understanding of all GD&T concepts, applications, and inspection. It will focus on actual industry drawings utilizing GD&T concepts.

JUNE 2016

Spanish Basic Blueprint Reading

6/4 & 6/11 | 8:00am – 4:00pm

This 16-hour introductory program explains the importance of engineering drawings in manufacturing and describes how drawings are portrayed and information communicated. Please note: This class is being offered with a bilingual instructor; course materials are in English.

Advanced G Code Programming

Tuesdays & Thursdays, 6/28 – 10/13 | 6:00pm – 9:00pm

Students will build upon topics covered in the introductory course and learn advanced G code techniques in this project-based class. Students will select proper tooling, make fixtures, write, run and verify G code programs, and inspect to print specifications.

Introduction to Coordinate Measuring Machines (CMM)

6/4, 6/11, & 6/18 at Made to Measure in East Dundee | 8:00am – 4:00pm

Get the most out of your measuring equipment and metrology personnel with a 3-day CMM class from Made to Measure. This NEW course is for inspection, engineering, and entry-level metrologists. All participants will get an introduction to DMIS software using ArcoCAD, Raven, and PC DMIS.



Mayor Craig Johnson of Elk Grove Village speaks as part of a panel at the 2015 Mayors for Manufacturing event

Mayors and Manufacturers To Meet at Prairie State College

Manufacturers are beneficial to towns and municipalities in a myriad of ways, from lifting the property tax burden from area homeowners, to bringing jobs and productivity into struggling areas, to bolstering local businesses by attracting

customers into local vicinities.

What mayor wouldn't want more revenue-enhancing manufacturers in his town?

Manufacturers are looking to transform, expand and update their facilities as a part of growing their businesses. They're looking for locations that welcome them, work with them to rezone if needed, grant building permits, and make their expenses reasonable so they can compete for contracted work and keep their employees busy.

But do Mayors know what manufacturers are looking for? Do manufacturers know how to work with city officials to develop a good relationship and opportunities that will benefit each other?

On May 10th at Prairie State College in Chicago Heights, mayors and manufacturers will learn from others' experiences, share ideas and focus on how to re-ignite the Chicago region's faltering business environment.

Mayors for Manufacturing will have the chance to tour Prairie State University's welding and machining student centers and learn how area high school and college-aged students can tap into high-paying engineering and machining jobs, simply by working with local community college machine shops and, of course, TMA's Training Center.

After the optional tour from 2 to 3 o'clock, an hour-long panel discussion on topics of interest to mayors and manufacturers will commence. After that, a reception will be held in Prairie State University's art display hall. At five o'clock, dinner featuring local Italian eatery Fratello's specialties will be topped off with a visit from Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle.

TMA members are encouraged to reach out to their mayors and invite them to meet with other manufacturers and mayors to discuss the future of manufacturing in Illinois.

Tickets are \$75, tables of eight are \$500. For more information, contact Meghan Gray at mgray@tmaillinois.org. •



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Deb Benning and Jean Pitzo

Ace Metal Crafts

Jean Pitzo, CEO and

Deb Benning, Vice President of Sales and Marketing

BENSENVILLE - Besides making customers happy and meeting deadlines with high quality products, at Ace Metal Crafts in Bensenville, “It’s all about the company culture,” says CEO Jean Pitzo.

“We’re culture people, we’re all about the people that work for us,” Pitzo said during a recent company visit. “We can talk about metal fabrication, or we can talk about our company culture, whichever you want.”

Not only is Ace Metal Crafts’ working environment unique, so is the fact that while the vast majority of manufacturers struggled to get through the 2008-2009 recession, Ace Metal nearly doubled.

“We grew 70 percent in the last recession,” Pitzo said. She attributes the dramatic climb to a hire she made at a crucial time.

“One of the things that was key to our success is Deb Benning,” she said.

When Benning, now Ace Metal’s vice-president of sales and marketing, joined the company, she took on many of Pitzo’s responsibilities. At the same time, Benning quickly doubled the size of the company, and then grew it by 50 percent again.

Benning’s experience in the steel industry prior to Ace Metal proved invaluable, but

her being a key part of the leadership team during the 2008 recession was also important.

Ace Metal Crafts’ work skyrocketed during the recession because two of their clients – the fast food industry and single serving coffee brewers – hit high demand levels in 2008 and 2009, along with customers in environmental and pharmaceutical fields.

“During that time, people ate more fast food, and we make components for meat processing machines that supply the fast food industry. We were also making frames for a company that puts the coffee in those little cups,” Pitzo said. “It was exploding at the same time. While other companies had their foot off the accelerator, we were going full board.”

And because they were so busy, Ace Metal needed more space to meet their customers’ demands. That’s when they moved to Bensenville from Franklin Park, where the company had been located for 51 years.

“It worked out perfectly. We had to get bigger space because we were jammed into 40,000 square feet. Now we’re in 82,000 square feet,” Pitzo said. “In 2011, buildings were plentiful and less expensive.”

But Ace Metals has also had its share of tough times.

“In 2001, we were losing \$5000 every day we opened the door,” Pitzo said. “It was the time of mad cow disease, when meat processing took a major hit. Then September 11, 2001 happened, and the bottom dropped out.”

“Everyone took a pay cut and sadly, we had to do some layoffs,” Benning said.

Still, despite all the ups and downs, Jean Pitzo says she loves every second as Ace Metal Crafts’ CEO. In 1989, Pitzo took over as a 31-year-old president, six years after her father, Jack Lichter, bought the business that was started in 1960 by 16 sheet metal workers.

In 1991, with an undergraduate degree in marketing and an MBA in finance from Northern Illinois University, Pitzo bought

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GRAINGER
FOR THE ONES WHO GET IT DONE

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Ace Metal Crafts

Jean Pitzo & Deb Benning

the company from her father and became the company's CEO, and her sister Mary became the human resources manager.

Now in 2015, Ace Metal Crafts is thriving – and it's partially because of the company's unique "trust" culture.

"My father didn't start the company, he bought it. He was a businessman – and very quickly turned it over into my hands," Pitzo said. "I was 31, so I didn't know how to do anything in the shop. I still don't know how to turn the equipment on, but I can buy it and finance it. So, from day one I had to trust our workforce."

"There were many good people that had been at Ace Metal Crafts for many years. They helped start the company. They helped me along the way, so all along I've always been about the trust," she said.

"It was a unique situation," she said. "I admire my father for turning it over to me, and I admire the men that helped me along the way to make this company successful."

Pitzo and Benning say the company exists to inspire and connect with people to have them unleash their potential and be free to express themselves.

"We want people to be their best selves," Benning said.

And when people are happy working, they are productive and happier when they go home, Pitzo said.

Both Pitzo and Benning advocate "lean manufacturing," a movement that has gained momentum over the past decade. Ace Metal Crafts was selected by Toyota's philanthropic arm to be one of three Chicago area companies to implement Toyota's successful "lean manufacturing" strategy.

Ms. Benning is using the skills she's acquired through the program to develop Ace's future leaders.

At the same time, the American Psychological Association bestowed Ace Metal Crafts with an award for psychologically safe work for the state of Illinois that they've cultivated for their 116 employees.

But Pitzo cautioned about giving the wrong impression that Ace Metal Crafts is so caring of their team that they don't push for deadlines to be met. Encouraging others to meet expectations builds a positive work experience, too.

"You can meet any challenges with the right attitudes and the right belief system," she said.

Will a third generation succeed Pitzo at Ace Metal Crafts' helm?

Jean's daughter Angela, 26, is learning the business from the shop floor up. Pitzo says she plans to hand her daughter the company keys just as her father did - when the time is right.

Ace Metal Crafts Company is located in 484 Thomas Drive in Bensenville, Illinois or at www.acemetal.com

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Jean Pitzo, Angela Pitzo, Deb Benning

TMA's Bales Metal Surface Solutions Named "2016 Best Place to Work"

By Jeannie Reall

Stacey Bales and her sister, Sara Mortensen, have a unique relationship with their employees.

"A lot of them have seen us in diapers," Stacey Bales said in a recent phone interview. "The majority of them have worked here 15 years or longer. Some of them grew up with us."

Bales has been president of Bales Metal Surface Solutions since 2009; her sister is vice president of sales and marketing. Each owns 50 percent of the company, which ranks No. 12 in Plastics News' Best Places to Work list for 2016.

Their father co-founded the company in 1978 in Illinois and set the precedent for good employee relations.

"He took care of his employees," Stacey Bales said. "He gave them a lot of extra little perks" like paid holidays and birthdays off, turkeys for Thanksgiving, paid hourlong lunches and, in at least one case, bailing a worker out of jail.

It's the little things that count.

But he also took care of the bigger things, like showing them respect and incorporating their families into events, which Bales said strengthens the company's culture. "We meet everyone's spouses and kids, sometimes their grandkids," she said.

In fact, Bales Metal was recognized with the 2015 Award for Business in the family business category from the Daily Herald Business Ledger of Lisle, Ill.

Also, Stacey Bales was named one of Plastics News' 2015 Rising Stars.

Bales Metal has operations in Downers Grove, Ill., and Harlingen, Texas. It applies proprietary coatings and finishes to molds to prevent corrosion, abrasion and wear.

A marketing push has led to growing sales and business, prompting the company to hire five new employees last year, bringing the staff roster up to 37.

"It's nice that we're a smaller, family-owned company," she said. "We can really take the time to sit down with each employee ... and find out what resources they need, things to make them more efficient. Because we're flexible, we can accommodate those requests."

Bales said her open-door policy helps keep things on an even keel.

"Employees will come in sometimes just to vent. By nipping things in the bud early on, letting them speak their minds, it kind of prevents things from reaching the boiling point. We give them the opportunity to communicate before little problems turn into big ones."

What also helps, she said, is giving employees a safe physical outlet through competitions like bowling and WhirlyBall — which is sort of a combination of jai alai and basketball played in bumper cars with a whiffle ball.

"I'm not the best player, but I give it the good old college try," Bales said. "We have a few beers. It's nice and it gives the employees a chance to gang up on us [managers]. We might try paintball next year."

Something else employees appreciate: holiday parties, summer outings, a 401(k) with matching contributions, and year-end bonuses based on length of employment and how profitable the company has been. Also at the end of the year, Bales Metal presents a certificate and gift card to each of at least 10 workers for their attendance, leadership and attitude, among other things.

The company also recognizes employee anniversaries in five-year increments with increasing cash bonuses, lunches with upper management and eventually, engraved watches.

Bales Metal pays for training such as productivity or time management workshops, and English as a Second Language classes. ●

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Stacey Bales and Sara Mortensen

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