Compendium:

NORTHEAST INDIANA WORKS

Board Newsletter, June 2024

Dear Board Members:

More than 200 northeast Indiana high school students signed with a current or future employer during May's Career and Technical Education (CTE) Month.

Region Celebrates CTE Month

Adams Wells Manufacturing Alliance (AWMA), Fort Wayne Community Schools (FWCS), the Impact Institute in Kendallville and Garrett-Keyser-Butler Community Schools were among the educational entities celebrating the region's CTE month by hosting a career signing event for students.

The events are designed to resemble athletic signing events where a high school student commits to playing sports for a university. CTE students were called up on a stage with their current or future employer to sign a document and take pictures with the employer and their loved ones. Many students were welcomed by the employer with gifts and company apparel.

Students at FWCS' Career Academy sign with employers during a ceremony at the Parkview Mirro Center for Research and Innovation.

This is the fifth year that northeast Indiana has recognized a collective CTE month, which was designated by Northeast Indiana Works and NEI (formerly known as the Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership).

Many of the students either have entered or plan to enter the workforce immediately after high school.

Northeast Indiana Works on NPR: **Rick Farrant**, Northeast Indiana Works director of communications, was interviewed by Indiana Public Broadcasting (serving the state's National Public Radio stations) regarding the decline in the regional and state labor force participation rates.

In an interview conducted May 22 by labor and employment reporter **Timoria Cunningham**, Farrant said the decline is likely due to a number of factors, including retirements involving an aging workforce, lack of accessible child care, and technological advancements like Artificial Intelligence (AI). Farrant said it's possible some families may have figured out how to get by on one income and some employers may be managing to operate with fewer employees.

Region's Companies Making Good Use of ETG Funds: Flint & Walling, a Kendallville manufacturer that employs 245 people, has already utilized more than $71,000 in Employer Training Grant (ETG) funds and is on the cusp of receiving $45,000 in ETG money in the latest round.

Hillary Corwin, human resources manager for Flint & Walling, says the ETG funds have helped the company train inexperienced newcomers and skill up existing workers.

She said it's also helped the company reinvest the money in such things as equipment and employee engagement efforts.

"This," she said, "makes it easier to seek additional training resources and helps offset costs as we work to build an even stronger training program."

In each of the seven rounds of funding, ETG has provided up to $50,000 reimbursement to qualifying companies. Employees must be retained for at least six months once their training has started. The program, part of Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb's Next Level Jobs initiative, is designed to help fill in-demand positions in six industry sectors: advanced manufacturing, agriculture, IT and business services, building and construction, health and life sciences, and transportation and logistics.

Since 2020, northeast Indiana companies have been allocated $12 million in ETG funds. In the latest round, $1.2 million will be made available regionally.

"Companies in northeast Indiana have really stepped up to the plate in accessing the opportunities presented through ETG," said **Kim Tempel**, senior director of business services/human resources at Northeast Indiana Works. "ETG and the training it provides not only helps companies, it elevates the financial stability of workers and ensures a robust regional economy."

Flint & Walling, which makes submersible pumps and motors, found it challenging at one time to hire experienced machinists, Corwin said. But even newly hired experienced machinists need to be trained and some of them may eventually be candidates for more skilled positions.

"They're a machinist," she said, "but perhaps we need more CNC setup operators, which is a little more specialized and brings an increase in pay."

Ivy Tech Touts Skills Training Initiative: Ivy Tech presented its Ivy+ Career Link initiative to members of the Indiana Workforce Board Alliance (INWBA) April 9.

Under the program, career link team members meet with employers, assess their needs, and then develop customized skills training.

(*The next board meeting will be from 9 to 10:30 a.m. June 7, 2024. It will be in person and virtual.)*