The Bulletin
March 5, 2020

Pipeline program earns honor

Eastern Workforce Investment Board's initiative has created hundreds of jobs since it began in 2016

By Matt Grahn
mgrahn@norwichbulletin.com (860) 389-1014

Various schools, unions and manufacturers have helped the Eastern Workforce Investment Board turn its manufacturing pipeline program into a success.

"As a team, we're all proud of a program like this," said Mark Hill, the EWIB chief operating officer.

Hill's organization announced earlier this week that it will receive the Chair's Award for Outstanding Achievement in Partnership from the National Association of Workforce Boards, which represents 550 workforce development boards across the country.

Hill said the award is in recognition of the Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative.

"That program was singled out for its impact on employers, job seekers, and the community at large," he said.

The program trains people for manufacturing positions with local companies like Electric Boat and members of the Eastern Advanced Manufacturing Alliance (EAMA). Hill said the program, that began in 2016, is funded from federal, state, and private sources.

There has been an 11.3% increase in manufacturing jobs in Connecticut since 2015 – led by hiring by defense contractors. Hill said the MPI directly created 1,500 jobs as of September, and that number will soon approach 1,600.

See PIPELINE, A5

At a glance

Ray Coombs, the vice chair of the Eastern Advanced Manufacturing Alliance, said supporting manufacturing in Connecticut also has plenty of indirect benefits to the economy because people in these jobs will be owning houses and shopping in the area.

PIPELINE

From Page A3

Ray Coombs, vice chair of the EAMA, said it was tough to get businesses and organizations to start working together.

"After the first meeting we had to try to bring people together, I said, 'We don't have a chance at this,'" Coombs, who is also the president of Westminster Tool, Inc., said.

Coombs said the common need for good employees was able to bring people together. At Westminster Tool, Ray Coombs said eight Westminster Tool employees went through the "entry level" pipeline program. A total of 20 Westminster Tool employees went through the Advanced Manufacturing Program at Quinnebaug Valley Community College.

"It's given us a tremendous advantage," he said. "Everybody in the world has the same problem, (which) is getting and retaining qualified help."

Hill wants to maintain and expand MPI, including focusing on the Youth Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative. Currently, 15 high schools in Connecticut participate in the program.

"Every high school in the state, region, and country have graduates that are not going to college, and they're not going into the military," he said. "They're going into the workforce."

EWIB is also working on a pipeline program for the healthcare industry. With an aging population, Hill said that industry will experience growth within the next decade or two.

"To have a program in place that can produce the skills in the workforce that will be apparent in the industry," he said. "I think that's also a great opportunity."