

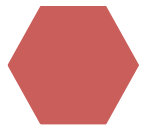
Factories of the Future: Industry and Educational Partnership

To find the future employees needed to fill the ranks of retiring workers who are exiting spring and metal stamping companies, look for more announcements like the one made this past summer in Bristol, Conn. between an educational institution and an SMI member company.

The Bristol Adult Education Center (BAEC) and Rowley Spring and Stamping (see related Springmaker Spotlight on page 59) held a press conference on August 15, 2014 to launch AEDAC (Adult Education Diploma and Certificate), an important workforce development program.

AEDAC is a GED/Skills in Manufacturing Certificate Program open to adult learners at BAEC. This program is a partnership between BAEC and Rowley Spring and Stamping, which are located in the same building. This scenario creates a perfect logistical and collaborative setting for academic and hands-on training to create a strong and successful program. AEDAC targets adult learners and opens the door for many adults who do not have the financial capability to go back to school.

Lawrence Covino, supervisor of adult education at BAEC, stated, “We are thrilled to have support from many community and business partners to implement this important program. AEDAC will create positive results that meet the needs of our adult learners as well as our business community.”



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John Dellalana of Rowley Spring and Stamping announces AEDAC at an August 15, 2014 news conference.



AEDAC provides participants with the opportunity to get their high school diploma as well as train them to be qualified for entry level positions in the manufacturing industry.

Rowley Spring and Stamping president John Dellalana says the program is a logical extension of the relationship the two parties already have. “With the BAEC as a tenant already, we were looking for a way to kind of break down the wall between us. We have a source to feed the demand for workers and both sides benefit.”

Dellalana says it has been great to work with BAEC to develop this practical curriculum. Students in the program complete the course with some in-house training at Rowley Spring where they are able to learn how to use some of the quality equipment and measurement devices. In addition, Dellalana says each student will spend 60 hours doing hands-on training with fourslide and spring coiling machines.

Rowley’s trainers in its quality, fourslide and spring departments are leading the student instruction. “We will take each student and show them how to operate a machine, how to do some basic setups and to understand how we do our quality inspection reports.”

After spending 60 hours in the classroom and 60 hours of practical training in the Rowley factory, Dellalana says students will receive a workforce readiness credential.

“We’re trying to make it something that the industry recognizes and promotes, and gives people an opportunity to enter the field,” concluded Dellalana.

Lots of Supporters

Representatives from the Dollar General Foundation, the Central CT Chambers of Commerce, the Main Street Community Foundation and the New England Spring and Metalstamping Association (NESMA) were also in attendance at the news conference to answer questions and lend support to this innovative program. Wal-Mart and the Farmington Bank Community Foundation are also supporting this program.

This pilot program has provided the foundation for the newly formed Bristol Technical Advisory Board. This board is comprised of business, education and community leaders to raise awareness regarding the technical-based career pathways available in the Greater Bristol region. This board will develop sustainable training, education and job placement programs to meet local/regional business needs, prepare students for STEM-related careers and advance the economic and social development of the region. The Bristol Board of Education, the Central CT Chambers of Commerce, the Main Street Community Foundation and NESMA are the key partners that have collaborated to promote and support the AEDAC program as well as establish the Bristol Technical Advisory Board.

Over 100 manufacturing companies are located in Bristol and its surrounding communities. Most of these companies have been in existence for decades and have deep roots in the area. Connecticut manufacturers contribute more than \$25 billion to the gross state product. These companies, in order to continue to prosper, need a

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skilled labor force to replace their aging skilled-employee base. Local and state governments are being asked to address this issue. The Bristol Board of Education with its community partners is taking progressive steps to meet the needs of its students as well as the needs of its community.

So Far, So Good

In an article in the December 3 issue of *The Bristol Press* about the AEDAC program, the paper stated, “Educators, organizers, local manufacturers and learners involved in the Bristol Adult Education Center’s manufacturing program all agree: the program is a win-win for everyone.”

One of the students enrolled in the program named Jodi, who declined to give the paper her last name, stated, “It’s a great opportunity to learn a trade that

isn't offered as widely as it should be in my opinion. We've got awesome teachers and the training is great."

Another student, Josh Soto, said the class has helped him improve his reading and math skills and have given him hope for a better future.

"The people here in the class are like my family," said Soto. "I've learned a lot on the factory floor. The teachers have been very patient with us and very helpful, even if we don't get all the answers right. I love getting greasy and putting my hands on the machines, it is very gratifying. This is one of the only places that keeps me smiling and brings me peace."

Dennis Bouchard, facilities manager at Rowley, said students performed "much better than expected."

"They are motivated and willing to do whatever it takes to better themselves, which is exactly what we are looking for," he said. "It's a lot better to work with people who are interested in manufacturing than to spend two months training people only for them to realize that it's not for them."

According to the article, three retired Rowley Spring and Stamping employees, Andres Andrade, Terry Hicks and Maxine Ouellette, supervised and instructed the students in the use of CNC machines, setting up four slide machines and quality inspection.

The first class of students were scheduled to graduate on December 18, 2014. Visit www.bristolpress.com to read the complete article. ■

