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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Innovative Manufacturing Training Program Provides Second Chances & New Career Opportunities to First Graduating Class

Workforce Connect Manufacturing Sector Partnership launched “ACCESS to Manufacturing Careers” to help train and support individuals previously involved in the criminal justice system.

CLEVELAND, July 28, 2020 – Despite the pandemic and manufacturing shutdowns, nine local men are celebrating their completion of an intensive training program to jump-start new careers in manufacturing.

“We’re hearing a lot these days about the unfair school-to-prison pipeline. We decided to flip that paradigm and create a prison-to-school pipeline. We know there is a lot of talent being overlooked in people who spent time in prison. Our manufacturing industry needs skilled workers and our manufacturers believe in the power of second chances. That’s why we created this program,” said Dr. Ethan Karp, President & CEO of MAGNET.

In January of 2020 (prior to COVID-19) there was an urgent shortage of skilled workers in the region. A MAGNET survey found about 8,000 open manufacturing jobs in Northeast Ohio. This talent shortage is predicted to double, even possibly triple, as the industry rebounds from the pandemic in the years ahead. There are nearly 3,000 people released from prison every year in Cuyahoga County. They often have difficulty starting over and finding jobs.

“We are proud to support this important program and it could serve as a model that can be replicated across the country. We need to build on-ramps into great careers in manufacturing for under-represented and often overlooked populations. This includes unemployed, under-employed, and people returning to the workforce. It’s the right thing to do and it’s good for the future of manufacturing,” said Nichol Lopriore, Precision Metalforming Association Educational Foundation Executive Director.

More than 80 candidates applied, leading to a first class of 12 students. The 4-week program launched in May in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The team quickly pivoted and moved 80% of the program to virtual learning, and Chromebooks and hotspots were purchased for each student. For the hands-on training that had to be done in person, MAGNET constructed a specially designed classroom with plexiglass dividers, temperature checks, and strict sanitation practices. The students received manufacturing training in print reading, quality systems, shop math, plus a full range of work readiness skills. Despite significant challenges in this environment ranging from digital literacy to COVID-related illness and death in some families, nine graduates celebrated the completion of the training program.

“We were thrilled to have such deep engagement from the participating employers. Their video plant tours, hands-on activities, and participation in informational interviews motivated and inspired the students who are excited about launching their careers in manufacturing,” said Jill Rizika, Executive Director of Towards Employment.



Thirteen manufacturing companies have interviewed the graduates for entry level jobs in manufacturing and job offers are being made and accepted. The goal is to make this an ongoing program in Cuyahoga County.

“I learned a lot about manufacturing. I’m just excited for the opportunity, now, to use it and to keep growing,” shared one of the graduates during the commencement ceremony.

“We’re excited to be part of a program that will introduce new manufacturing talent into the region. As we emerge from the current crisis the need to fill thousands of entry-level manufacturing jobs will return. This requires that we explore innovative approaches and involve often overlooked populations. We feel that working with returning citizens is especially important and yields benefits to those individuals and their families, and by extension, our neighborhoods and our region,” said Pete Accorti, President, Talan Products.

The Workforce Connect Manufacturing Sector Partnership designed and launched this pilot program with the leadership of 10 manufacturing companies, including Talan Products, Elsons International, and Alloy Engineering. Towards Employment and the Precision Metalforming Association collaborated with the manufacturers on curriculum development and delivery. Recruiting this first cohort was supported by 10 other workforce development organizations. The program was funded by Ohio Means Jobs | Cleveland-Cuyahoga County, The Nordson Corporation Foundation, Precision Metalforming Association Educational Foundation, MAGNET, Workforce Connect Funder’s Group, Deaconess Foundation, and the Greater Cleveland Partnership.

ABOUT THE WORKFORCE CONNECT MANUFACTURING SECTOR PARTNERSHIP

Initiated in 2019, the Manufacturing Sector Partnership is led and directed by over 20 manufacturing employers in Cuyahoga County. Facilitated by MAGNET and the Greater Cleveland Partnership, the sector partnership strives to close the talent gap for manufacturing in Cuyahoga County through unique programmatic interventions and systems change initiatives. The manufacturers have set a vision of making Cleveland the manufacturing education capital and are working hard to build an abundance of diverse and skilled employees. www.manufacturingsectorpartnership.org

ABOUT TOWARDS EMPLOYMENT

With a mission is to empower individuals to achieve and maintain self-sufficiency through employment, Towards Employment (TE) is a proven leader in workforce development. TE connects people to careers - which in turn changes people’s lives, advances businesses, and strengthens community in Northeast Ohio. Learn more about Towards Employment programming, career pathway model and workforce efforts at <https://www.towardsemployment.org/>.

ABOUT THE PRECISION METALFORMING ASSOCIATION

The Precision Metalforming Association (PMA) is the full-service trade association representing the \$137-billion metalforming industry of North America—the industry that creates precision metal



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products using stamping, fabricating, spinning, slide forming and roll forming technologies, and other value-added processes. Its nearly 800 member companies also include suppliers of equipment, materials and services to the industry.

ABOUT MAGNET

MAGNET is a non-profit consulting group. We grow the manufacturing industry and unlock prosperity in Northeast Ohio. Our practical consulting helps start-ups thrive and small and medium-sized companies transform with technology, innovation, and talent. We create jobs and drive change by collaborating with manufacturing CEOs, governments, community leaders, and educators to solve problems and build opportunities. MAGNET is part of the NIST and Ohio Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) program to support small and medium manufacturers across the US. Find out more: <https://www.manufacturingsuccess.org/>

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