

IN THIS ISSUE:

- What is SVAM?
- Outstanding Woman in Manufacturing
- Trainings
- Hiring Heroes
- Lean 101 Best Practices Event
- Upcoming Events
- Scholarships
- Center of Excellence Update
- Employers Training Collaborative Grant Information



Pictured: Donna Kestner
Photo by David Crigger
of Bristol Herald Courier



Pictured: Lennie Gail Mitcham,
SVAM Executive Director; Donna
Kestner, award winner, and Gil
Graham, Scholle Plant Manager

Who/What is SVAM??

The Southwest Virginia Alliance for Manufacturing, Inc. (SVAM) is a non-profit, 501c3 organization focused on supporting and strengthening all manufacturers currently in the region as well as welcoming new industry. SVAM accomplishes this in a unique way—by being governed by a Board of Directors made of up southwest Virginia manufacturers. Programs and initiatives —many outlined in this newsletter—are held to carry out SVAM’s strategic plan. More information about SVAM can be found at www.swvam.org/about-svam.

Our Mission Statement: To establish and promote the regional collaborations in support of manufacturing and manufacturing careers as part of an economic development initiative.

Outstanding Woman in Manufacturing

Beginning in February, SVAM accepted nominations for the 2015 Outstanding Woman in Manufacturing Award. SVAM asked its member companies to nominate one woman within their company they felt rises about the rest. This is the second year that SVAM has given this award.

The purpose of the award is to show the significant role that women play in manufacturing. This award highlights women, at all levels, who have demonstrated excellence in manufacturing. It encourages women who work in the manufacturing environment to continue to strive for excellence and also helps to showcase a different side of manufacturing, which can often be seen as a male-dominated field.

Nominations were scored based on company impact, personal drive, adapting to change, teamwork, and leadership.

The finalists for the award were Rexanne Coyner, Principle Project Engineer with General Dynamics in Marion, Virginia; Susan Garrett, Production Coordinator with Steel Fab in Lebanon, Virginia; and Donna Kestner, Lead at Scholle Packaging.

The winner of the 2015 Outstanding Woman in Manufacturing Award was Donna Kestner. SVAM’s selection committee noted in their comments that they were particularly impressed with her personal drive and initiative having started at an entry level position and worked herself up to a lead role at Scholle.

Her nominator, Doug Nelms, said, “Donna is one of the ‘go to’ employees in the plant in regards to quality. She is extremely dependable and constantly keeps a smile on her face. She finds the positive in people and most situations.”

Donna was presented with her award in front of her peers at a Scholle Packaging meeting.

Last year the award was presented to Nita McIntyre of General Dynamics. SVAM used the nomination submitted for the Outstanding Woman in Manufacturing Award to submit Nita for the Manufacturing Institute’s STEP awards. Nita attended the STEP Ahead Awards as an honoree.

Leadership Skills Training for Manufacturers

Beginning with an Effective Leadership Seminar in April, SVAM put together a calendar of Supervisor training events to help with such issues as communication, conflict resolution, team building, generations/personalities in the workplace, and much more.

These trainings were led by Marsha Litton-Baker, Licensed Professional Counselor and Employee Assistance Program Manager for Mountain States Health Alliance. As with all Lunch-N-Learns and Seminars, attendance for these trainings was available to all southwest Virginia manufacturers. 10

manufacturers were served through these trainings and SVAM saw the greatest attendance of any previous training.

In May, SVAM held a Lunch-N-Learn on the topic of Stress Management for Leaders. Marsha talked about ways to reduce negative stress in the workplace. She provided tips for creating a stress free work environment and tips to plan your day for tasks when you will be the most productive/successful.

In June SVAM held a Lunch-N-Learn on the topic of Crucial Conversations—How to Have Those Difficult Conversations at Work. During this training, Marsha discussed how to handle conflict, addressed problems that occur in conflict, triggers for conflict, and provided tips for problem solving and handling conflicts effectively.

SVAM would like to thank General Dynamics in Marion, Virginia for hosting the Lunch-N-Learns and providing lunch for attendees.

Hiring Heroes

SVAM GOALS:

The Southwest Virginia Alliance for Manufacturing operates under the following three goals which guide programming and initiatives to support the sustainment and advancement of manufacturing in the region:

1. To establish and promote the regional collaborations in support of manufacturing and manufacturing careers as part of an economic development initiative.
2. To redefine the image of manufacturing with young people and their parents, their educators, the community and policy makers in a manner that increases the number of young adults and other members of the workforce who pursue manufacturing careers.
3. To close the skills gap for regional manufacturers by aligning educational and workforce training resources with the most pressing demands of area industry.

In May, SVAM hosted Hiring Our Heroes—a very unique Hiring Event for veterans and service members in the region.

The goal of the Hiring Event was to connect veterans and service members with employers in the southwest Virginia region. As part of the “pre-qualification” process, veterans and service members attended a free, half day class that covered Workplace Expectations, Interview Preparation, Resume Development and a Drug Screen. The classes acted as a refresher while communicating to employers that the veterans

and service members are “ready-to-hire.”

On the date of the event pre-qualified veterans were interviewed by area employers, primarily in the manufacturing industry, with open positions. These employers included General Dynamics, Steel Fab, Azz Galvanizing, Tadano Mantis, Utility Trailer-Atkins, and Universal Fibers. Some veterans had the opportunity to be interviewed by every employer that was there that day.

For SVAM, the link between manufacturers and veterans was obvious. Em-

ployers are looking for employees with soft skills - those who are reliable, self-motivated, driven, and can pass a drug screen - as well as the hard skills needed to get the job done.

Through various trainings, veterans have acquired unique skill sets that make them valuable employees. This event allowed SVAM to support both manufacturers and those who serve our country at the same time.

SVAM would like to thank The Southwest Virginia Workforce Development Board and United Way of Southwest Virginia for sponsoring this event.

Principles of Lean 101 Best Practices Training

The Southwest Virginia Alliance for Manufacturing would like to thank Bristol Compressors International for hosting a peer-to-peer one day seminar about the Principles of Lean 101. All Southwest Virginia manufacturers were invited to attend this event.

Bristol Compressors hosted the event to provide information to the community about their experiences with Lean, as well as to provide a networking environment for Business Leaders in the area who are interested in Continuous Improvement.

On the day of the event, Mark Smithson and James Thomas of Bristol Compressors presented a basic overview of Lean. During the presentation they

covered the history of Lean, a definition, the key Lean concepts (Takt time, one piece flow, pull systems, cell design, KPIs, and kaizen), 5-S and why you should do it, Visual Management, and Gemba walks. They also discussed standard work and problem solving. The presentation was closed with a few slides about Bristol Compressor’s vision. After the presentation, a plant tour was provided to showcase some of Bristol Compressor’s efforts, and to answer questions about the company’s experiences.

“There is one big reason to embrace Lean in your company,” says, James Thomas, Continuous Improvement Director for Bristol Compressors, “I forget where I heard this story but I

heard it from someone. Every morning on the plains in Africa, a gazelle wakes up. It knows it must outrun the fastest lion or it will be killed. Every morning on the plains in Africa, a lion wakes up. It knows it must run faster than the slowest gazelle or it will starve to death. It doesn’t matter if you are lion or gazelle, when you wake up you had better be running. Our businesses are like that; we must hit the ground running. That is what Lean helps you do.”

It is the desire of Bristol Compressors to have a peer-to-peer group to discuss best practices of Lean. If you are interested in being part of such group contact James Thomas at 276-645-2410.

Upcoming SVAM Events

2015 Southwest Virginia Manufacturers’ Expo—August 4th

Don’t miss your opportunity to attend SVAM’s annual Manufacturers’ Expo on August 4, 2015 at the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center in Abingdon, Virginia.

The purpose of the event is to provide a peer-to-peer networking environment for manufacturers to get to know one another, share best practices, and learn about how to utilize the capabilities of fellow manufacturers in the region.

Selling to the Defense Logistics Agency Webinar—August 6th

provided by the Procurement Technical Assistance Center of southwest Virginia in partnership with SVAM. This event will be held at several locations across the region, including the Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator in Abingdon.

This webinar will inform and educate the attendees on the “how-to’s” of doing business with the Defense Logistics Agency. The DLA spends more than \$11.6 billion a year to purchase 5.2 million items to support our men and women in uniform. Businesses in southwest Virginia have the capability to supply some of these items.

The 2015 Manufacturers Appreciation and Awards Dinner—September 24th

Each year SVAM hosts an appreciation and awards dinner to showcase manufacturing from the passed year. This event is held in conjunction with National Manufacturing Day.

At this year’s dinner a panel will discuss the economic development impact of the Center of Excellence.

Be sure to check the SVAM website for requests for award nominations!

SVAM's Manufacturing Related Scholarship

For several years, SVAM has been awarding scholarships to students in support of its goal to promote manufacturing and its careers.

This scholarship awards funds to students interested in pursuing post-secondary education in a manufacturing related field which includes all areas of manufacturing both technical and administrative.

This is a very unique scholarship in that it is able to provide funds to students who are attending any level

of post-secondary education including technical programs. The scholarship seeks to increase the number of students interested in pursuing a career in manufacturing to raise awareness for the career opportunities in manufacturing right here in Southwest Virginia.

SVAM received several applications for this year's scholarships from graduating seniors in SVAM's membership counties. These students were pursuing such careers as weld-

ing, accounting, engineering, computer science, and more!

The Committee interviewed each qualified applicant at their schools as part of the selection process. During the interviews the students showed great excitement for manufacturing and the region!

The Board awarded scholarship funding in the amount of \$14,500 to 20 students for the 2015-2016 school year.

Southwest Virginia Advanced Manufacturing Center of Excellence Update

The Southwest Virginia Advanced Manufacturing Center of Excellence (SVAM-CoE) continues to move forward with the implementation of the grant proposal submitted and approved by the Tobacco Commission in 2014. The CoE has hosted and toured a CCAM representative, signed the MOU for the CoE satellite in Bluefield, added new staff, and accomplished many other milestones since the last update.

SVAM-CoE World Tour - SVAM-CoE, as an affiliate site of the Commonwealth Center for Advanced Manufacturing (CCAM) and planned Advanced Manufacturing Academy, will have access to the training network that is being developed statewide and to a larger network of manufacturers which may result in economic development for the region. CCAM is an applied research center that bridges the gap between fundamental research typically performed at universities and product development routinely performed by companies. CCAM accelerates the transition of research innovation from the laboratory to commercial use. In order for CCAM to have the full picture and understanding of what SVAM-CoE truly entails, a personal invitation to visit and tour the region was extended to Bruce Sobczak, CCAM Director of Workforce Development. Mr. Sobczak traveled to the Southwest Virginia region where he spent three (3) days touring the CoE, CoE Satellites, and distance learning sites as well as meeting and hearing from the many partners collaborating

with SVAM to help make the CoE a success.

Bluefield Satellite CoE MOU Signed

- A part of the tour with Mr. Sobczak included a stop in Bluefield at the future site of the Bluefield Satellite CoE. The plans for the satellite include training in mechatronics (industrial maintenance) and advanced welding. The site will also serve as a distance learning site with a newly equipped computer lab thanks in part to the Southwest Virginia Workforce Development Board. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been approved and signed by the Tazewell County Industrial Development Authority (IDA) and SVAM Board of Directors. Site renovations are underway. In addition to the site renovations, Tazewell County IDA has committed to funding some scholarships to assist with training tuition at the CoE.

Industry Council Meets & Selects

Officers - The Industry Council, with all positions filled, held its first meeting. Gregory Farmer, Manufacturing Manager for Joy Global, was selected to serve as Industry Council Chair. Jason Hennigan, Deputy Program Manager for General Dynamics, was selected to serve as Industry Council Secretary. The Industry Council will continue to meet on a monthly basis and offer support, expertise and recommendations to the SVAM-CoE Board of Directors in the areas of industry trends, alignment of training, development of Safety Programs, etc.

Instructor Development & Training

Two of the six community college mechatronics (industrial maintenance) instructors have completed Siemens Instructor Certification training in Ber-

lin, Germany. The remaining four instructors, originally scheduled for training in June, had to reschedule due to travel conflict within Siemens. The instructors will complete the Siemens Level I Instructor Certification Program August 3-14, 2015. The completion and certification of the Siemens Level I program will enhance the mechatronics offerings through the local community colleges, which will feed into the training offered at the SVAM-CoE. SVAM-CoE is covering all fees and expenses for the instructor trainings including: tuition, travel, lodging, and meals.

Welcome Aboard New Staff - SVAM-CoE is pleased to announce that Sandra Fournier joined its team as the Executive Assistant to the Center Director in July. Sandra has amassed more than 20 years of experience in customer service, accounting/ financial management, and day-to-day office operations. Before relocating to Abingdon from Florida, Sandra provided daily oversight of the operational activities of county-managed recreation facilities as the Operations Specialist. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration from Saint Leo University in 2014, and currently working toward a second Bachelor's degree in Business Management with a concentration in accounting with Southern New Hampshire University. She has already proven to be an asset in her first project to consolidate the accounting system. Sandra will provide support to the CoE Director, track grants for compliance and reporting, staff council meetings, and maintain the financial systems for SVAM and the CoE. There is no doubt that all will find her to be a courteous, supportive, and knowledgeable resource in our office.

Why become a member of SVAM?

- **Networking opportunities**
- **Access and free admission to trainings**
- **Priority access to SVAM worker pool**
- **Company exposure on website, at events, on newsletter, etc.**
- **Peer-to-Peer Best Practices Meetings**
- **Free admission to all SVAM events to include Manufacturers Appreciation Dinner**
- **Community outreach opportunities to change the image of manufacturing**
- **Training Sharing**
- **And much more!**

If you would like to learn more about SVAM-CoE, contact Ms. Surrentt to schedule a presentation at your business or organization. She can be reached at (276) 525-1400 or ssurrentt@svamcoe.org.

Employers Training Collaborative Grant

Background

The Southwest Virginia Alliance for Manufacturing, Inc. (SVAM), a non-profit educational organization, is again providing a workforce skills training cost reimbursement program to manufacturers in the 17-jurisdiction SVAM footprint. This program is funded through a grant from the Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission. It is an industry-led effort to provide better-trained workers for manufacturers and to promote manufacturing careers in the region. The \$200,000 grant will pay for workforce skills training to meet the needs of local industry in southwest Virginia. The Commission has limited reimbursement to 25-33% of training costs with documentation of a dollar-for-dollar match. It has also limited the types of training eligible for reimbursement to: Welding, Machining, National Career Readiness Credential Platinum Level, and Manufacturing Technician Level I. A complete listing of eligible subcategories can be achieved by contacting SVAM.

Application and Approval Process:

Any manufacturing firm located in the SVAM service area of southwest Virginia may apply for these funds.

- Questions or requests for application forms can be directed to Lennie Gail Mitcham, Executive Director of the Southwest Virginia Alliance for Manufacturing, 276.492.2100 or (lgdunlop@swvam.org).
- Completed application must include a course description, proof of payment, and student listing.
- Deadline for monthly approvals is the first business day of each month.
- Applications may be mailed, emailed or faxed.
- The Board of Directors of the Southwest Virginia Alliance for Manufacturing reviews it for approval.
- Following SVAM approval, the request is forwarded to the Tobacco Commission staff for approval.
- SVAM then makes reimbursement payment to the manufacturer.

Benefits to Employers in Participating in the Employers Training Collaborative

- Better trained pool of job applicants and incumbent workers
- Greater productivity as employee's skills are more aligned to employer's needs;
- Cost offsets from reduced turnover and increased productivity;
- Development of sector-specific credentials;
- More responsive education and training programs; elimination of duplication;
- New and enhanced relationships with their employees, other employers, training providers, economic developers, support providers, community, etc.;
- Recognition by citizens as leaders invested in community growth and well-being

If you have questions or would like more information please contact the SVAM office using the above contact.

Members of The Southwest Virginia Alliance for Manufacturing, Inc.



Associate Members:

Manufacturing Technology Center, American Wood Fibers, Mazak Corporation, Southwest Virginia Workforce Investment Board

Affiliate Members:

Tri-County Driving Academy, Occupational Enterprises, Inc., United Way Virginia Highlands, Russell County IDA, Russell County Government, Spectrum Design, Virginia Coalfield Economic Development Authority, Alliance Engineering, Virginia Economic Development Partnership-International Trade, Keith Thompson, Dickenson County Board of Supervisors, Genedge Alliance, Joint IDA of Wythe, Virginia Highlands Community College, Micronic Technologies, New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Area Consortium Board