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Smyth Career and Technology Center and the Washington County Career and Technical Education Center Dress for Success participants



Dress for Success students on a tour of Scholle Packaging.

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.

Dress for Success—The Tours

At the beginning of the school year SVAM worked with the Washington County Career and Technical Education Center and the Smyth Career and Technology Center to provide 6 students starting their senior year with clothing that they could wear to school and on the job. This project, called Dress for Success, came to SVAM from Communities in Schools which serves these two counties. SVAM, seeing a direct correlation between the intent of this program and our Goals, decided to take on this project.

After a shopping trip to purchase clothes to wear to school, to interviews, and on the job, SVAM organized tours of manufacturing facilities for these students to allow them to truly see what manufacturing looks like today.

The first stop was at Utility Trailer in Glade Spring where Sam Cassell, Plant Manager at Utility Trailer, spoke about what is done at Utility Trailer and some of the career opportunities available to the students.

The students then went to Scholle Packaging in Chilhowie where they received a tour of the facility and learned about the company. Scholle provided lunch for all participants. At Scholle Packaging representatives also spoke about what manufacturing employers look for in an employee and told the students how to prepare for a career in manufacturing.

A few Scholle employees spoke about their career paths in manufacturing and how they worked their way up in the company from entry-

level positions. They spoke about why they have stayed in manufacturing throughout their careers and the ways that manufacturing has benefitted them.

Connie Wyatt, JVG Specialist with Smyth Career and Technology Center said, “The impact of this program was tremendous! They wore their dress clothes to school a couple of times because they were so proud of them...This opportunity gave them a great sense of pride and really built their self-confidence. Without this program, these two students would not have had the confidence to go out and look for a job or go on to school after graduation. Now, they can hold their heads up proudly and know that they can be successful in their future endeavors.”

Trainings

FMLA Lunch-N-Learn:

In January, Jennifer Keller of Baker Donelson law firm spoke at Scholle Packaging on the topic of FMLA. She discussed changes to FMLA as well as tips for handling FMLA related situations. 22 manufacturing and business personnel attended this training. Thank you to Jennifer Keller for speaking for to Scholle Packaging for providing lunch and the venue.

MTI Lunch-N-Learn:

In February, Katherine DeRosear, Director of Workforce Development for the Virginia Manufacturers Association provided an overview of the Manufacturing Technician Level 1 certificate program. She spoke of the benefits of the program for area manufacturers—a skill certification that could easily communicate the essential skills needed for a “manufacturing work ready” workforce.

Effective Leadership Seminar:

In March, Marsha Litton-Baker, Mountain States Health Alliance, Employee Assistance Program Manager, led a seminar geared toward various issues that leadership face such as communication and team building, understanding the impact of personality and generational influences in the workplace, conflict resolution, performance, and more. This training began a three part series on leadership development by Marsha.



The SVAM display.

Virginia Highlands Community College hosted its annual Career Carnival in March at the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center.

8th grade students from Smyth and Washington Counties and the City of Bristol attended this event.

The purpose was to showcase the various career opportunities available in the region by having representatives set up eye-catching displays or hands-on activities to spark the students' interest and get them thinking about careers. SVAM was in attendance to represent manufacturing.

SVAM had a display showcasing a general understanding of the diversity of careers available in manufacturing. Common misconceptions were also addressed at the SVAM display to disprove some of the negative ideas that some people associate with manufacturing.

SVAM members were also invited to attend to showcase their companies and to discuss with students some of the career opportunities they offer. Scholle Packaging, General Dynamics, and Steel Fab were in attendance.

Over 100 students stopped by the tables to learn more about the manufacturing

companies. Representatives talked about the products that are made at each facility as well as discussed the sorts of careers they have available.

"One of the first things I asked students was, 'What is manufacturing?' Most students just looked at me with no idea. After explaining manufacturing and the benefits of its careers you could see several students' interest peak. When I told them how many manufacturing facilities are in southwest Virginia many of them were really surprised. It was a lot of fun," said Lennie Gail Dunlop, SVAM Executive Director.



Scholle Packaging's Display



General Dynamic's Display

On March 5, United Way of Southwest Virginia held a dinner to recognize outstanding contributions to the community and highlight accomplishments of the last year. SVAM Member companies Utility Trailer and Universal Fibers were recognized.

Utility Trailer received the Top Giver Award. According to United Way, "Utility Trailer Atkins and Utility Trailer Glade Spring had the highest cumulative giving across

United Way of Southwest Virginia's region in 2014. One of the plant managers even joined us as a campaign chair helping to lead campaign efforts in Washington County and increasing his own plant campaign by 75%. These heroes stepped up to the challenge and raised more than \$110,000 in 2014."

Universal Fibers received the Growth and Innovation Award. According to United Way, "Universal Fiber Systems went above and beyond the call of duty and demonstrated high levels of creati-

ity and forward-thinking during the campaign. Universal Fiber Systems increased employee education, allowing United Way presentations thus providing great opportunities for employees to learn how their investment impacts their community. The company's incentive included allowing employees who contributed a chance to win an afternoon Backpacking, providing them with a hands-on experience at what it means to Live United."



David Monk with Steel Fab talks with middle schoolers.

Members Highlighted at United Way Southwest Virginia's Annual Dinner

Member Highlights



Tadano Mantis, member company of SVAM, have announced their plans for expansion of their Richlands facility.

According to the Crane Network News, "Gov. Terry McAuliffe announced that Tadano Mantis Corporation, a customized crane manufacturer, will invest \$2.5 million to expand its manufacturing operation in the town of Richlands in Tazewell County. McAuliffe said Virginia successfully competed against Tennessee for the project, which will create 25 new jobs.

Commonwealth Secretary of Commerce and Trade Maurice Jones traveled to Tazewell County to make the announcement on behalf of the McAuliffe administration.

'Tadano Mantis is an important employer in Tazewell County, and the creation of new jobs in a region that is working very hard to transform itself economically is great news,' Jones said. "We are grateful to the company for its continued investment in the Commonwealth and to the officials in Tazewell County and the region for their work on this project.' ...

'We are very excited about our Richlands plant expansion,' Tadano Mantis Corporation Chief Operating Officer Shiro Morita said. 'We can hire more workers from local communities. We can have more suppliers and vendors locally, too. We are looking forward to

seeing the completion of this expansion as soon as possible.'

McAuliffe approved a \$100,000 grant from the Governor's Opportunity Fund to assist Tazewell County with the project. The Virginia Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission also approved \$140,000 in Tobacco Region Opportunity Funds.

The company is eligible to receive state benefits from the Virginia Enterprise Zone Program, administered by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development. Additional funding and services to support the company's employee training activities will be provided through the Virginia Jobs Investment Program."

Scholarships in Progress

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. 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.

To qualify for this scholarship students must be planning to use their education to begin a career in manufacturing—preferably in the Southwest Virginia region. Students could be pursuing technical programs such as welding or machining, but may also receive funds for the administrative side of manufacturing such as management, accounting, marketing, and more.

The Board chose to offer this scholarship to students in the counties in

which SVAM has membership representation.

Applications have been sent to the schools and on-site visits have been made to several schools to share information about this scholarship and to distribute flyers for the halls.

With the enthusiasm from several schools, SVAM is hopeful to have a strong pool of applicants this year.

Interviews will begin in April and announcements will be made in May.

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.**

Southwest Virginia Advanced Manufacturing Center of Excellence Update

The Southwest Virginia Advanced Manufacturing Center of Excellence (SVAM-CoE) has moved into the Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator (VHSBI) and established the administrative offices. The administrative offices have been furnished and equipped with necessary technology and networking to perform daily operations.

In partnership with the Southern Virginia Higher Education Center, also designated as a Center of Excellence serving southern Virginia, an online learning platform is in development with Bluedrop Platform Networks. The learning platform (LP) will enable students to register, complete training modules remotely and track their progress. Administration and instructors will be able to track enrollments, grades, attendance, course completions, and credentials attained. Student information and data that are collected through the learning platform will be compiled for performance metrics.

The development of the advanced manufacturing skills pipeline is a vital component of the grant proposal and work of SVAM-CoE. Some of the first steps have been taken to address the talent pipeline. Six community college mechatronics

(industrial maintenance) instructors have registered for the June 8-19 Siemens Level 1 Instructor Certification Program in LaVergne, TN. The completion and certification of the Siemens Level 1 program will enhance the mechatronics offerings through the local community colleges, which will feed into the training offered at the SVAM-CoE. One instructor, already Siemens Level 1 Instructor certified, will travel to Berlin in May to complete the Siemens Level 2 Instructor Certification, further strengthening the industrial maintenance curricula throughout the region. SVAM-CoE is covering all fees for all 7 instructors related to trainings including: tuition, travel, lodging, and meals.

Two SVAM-CoE classrooms, at the main campus in Abingdon, will be equipped with the newest computer technology to enhance the learning experience as well as ensure that students at any of the seven (7) distance learning sites will have access to live or recorded instructor-led lectures. Video conferencing equipment will be installed as well as Smartboards.

Welding curricula and training is the first program that SVAM-CoE will offer in early October. In preparation of the advanced welding training at the Abingdon campus, Tazewell County Satellite CoE and Duffield Satellite CoE, welding

equipment has been identified and sourced. The equipment will be ordered mid to late May with planned installation to occur in late July.

The SVAM-CoE Board of Directors meets on a monthly basis to make decisions, approve policies and address open action items. At the April Board meeting, the remaining two (2) open positions on the Industry Council are expected to be filled and approved. The Academic Council, with all positions filled, held its first meeting. Dr. Brenda Hess, Superintendent of Russell County Schools, was named Chair of Academic Council. Melinda Leland, VP of Workforce Development and Continuing Education at VHCC and WCC, was named Academic Council Secretary. Dr. Hess, as Chair of Academic Council, will also assume a position on the SVAM-CoE Board of Directors.

Stephanie Surrentt, SVAM-CoE Director, is getting involved with workforce and economic development initiatives throughout the region. In addition, she has made several presentations about SVAM-CoE.

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.

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
- Free admission to all SVAM events to include Manufacturers Appreciation Dinner
- Newsletter
- Community outreach opportunities to change the image of manufacturing
- And much more!

Members of The Southwest Virginia Alliance for Manufacturing, Inc.



TADANO



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



Contact the SVAM office for more information:

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