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Michigan Needs to Feed Manufacturing Job Pipeline

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

each of the next three closest states by more than 50 percent, Hadden said.

But even as the state enjoys this growth, 62 percent of Michigan manufacturers report they are experiencing great difficulty in maintaining production levels due to workforce shortages and employee skill deficiencies, Hadden said.

"Part of the challenge in finding trained workers comes from the negative perceptions or misperceptions about a career in manufacturing," Hadden said. "Most Americans do not think of manufacturing as a great career choice or a high-skilled work environment. They think of the operations of 40 or 50 years ago - dark, dirty and dangerous."

But the truth is, Hadden said, that today's manufacturing jobs require higher skill competencies. High-skilled jobs in the manufacturing sector grew by 12 percent from 2003 through 2010, while mid-skilled jobs decreased by 3 percent and low-skilled jobs fell 9 percent over the same period.

"In manufacturing today, we have computer-controlled robots and machines now producing and moving goods," Hadden said. "Manufacturing is a highly-skilled, customized and integrated workplace."

And, he said after his speech, people in the state understand that there is a problem.

"That's why it is important that we have events like this," Hadden said. "Community colleges need to talk to businesses. K-12 educators need to talk to community colleges and employers need to talk to the state."

And what they should talk about, Hadden said, is how to integrate training with both

student and business needs.

"There are a lot of young people who get frustrated because they can't meet state education standards," Hadden said. "They fear they're going to flunk algebra 2, so they drop out. Why can't the algebra 2 requirement have an equivalent of 'applied math for manufacturing?' Why can't a foreign language requirement be a computer language?"

Hadden said he believes some students will study harder when they know their curriculum will lead them to a job.

In the past, every high school had a shop class. Now, each county has its own trade course center that includes things like nursing as well as shop. These centers aren't part of schools, so students who take the classes have to leave school and take a bus to get there.

"Not everyone is going to be an engineer," Hadden said. "But there are still good middle-class manufacturing jobs available to those with the training. That's why it's important that both students and employers know about what groups like the state's M-TEC program and MCC can do."

Part of the problem, Hadden said, was that in 2008 no one was hiring. So it was a tough sell to tell people they had to invest time and money getting training for jobs that weren't there.

"The pipeline stopped being filled," Hadden said. "Now, the jobs are back, and we have to start filling the pipeline. People should check out what they can learn at MCC and other places. "We take these services here in Michigan for granted, but they really are good. They have a lot to offer everyone. I urge people to check them out."

Solanus Casey Dinner Set

The Solanus Casey Center, a Capuchin ministry, is holding its tenth annual wine, dinner and auction event Saturday, Feb. 15, at 6 p.m. in The Met Troy at 5500 Crooks Rd., Troy.

This year's event features a cocktail hour with appetizers, a sit-down dinner complete with fine wine, plus silent and live auctions.

Tickets are \$75 per person and can be purchased by calling 313-579-2100, ext. 153, or on-line at www.SolanusCenter.org

Raffle tickets are available for \$10 each. You need not be present to win. The grand prize is \$2,500 cash, second prize \$1,500 and third \$500.

"This year's wine event is 'nourishing the soul' making it a

perfect Valentine's celebration," said Capuchin friar Father Larry Webber, director of the Solanus Casey Center. "It's the perfect time of year to recall the loving and compassionate heart of Venerable Solanus Casey, all while supporting the Center that is dedicated to the holiness of Venerable Solanus Casey."

Proceeds of the event benefit the Solanus Casey Center inspired by the holy life of Father Solanus.

The Solanus Casey Center opened its doors in 2002 in order to lead visitors on a spiritual journey. It's a part of the Capuchin Province of St. Joseph, headquartered in Detroit, which serves Capuchin ministries worldwide.

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