Calumet Manufacturing Initiative

PARTNERSHIP LEAD ORGANIZATION – ILLINOIS MANUFACTURING EXCELLENCE CENTER

SERVICE AREA
MULTI-STATE: Cook County in Illinois, and Lake County in Indiana; and serves the following cities: Chicago, Illinois; Calumet City, Illinois; Dolton, Illinois; Harvey, Illinois; Markham, Illinois; Maywood, Illinois; Westchester, Illinois; Cicero, Illinois; Berwyn, Illinois; Blue Island, Illinois; Whiting, Indiana; East Chicago, Indiana; Gary, Indiana; Hammond, Indiana; Lansing, Indiana.

GOALS
★ Total participants served - 715
★ Total Participants Completing Education/Training Activities - 608
★ Total Number of Unemployed and Underemployed Participants who Complete Training Activities and Obtain Employment - 430
★ Total Number of Incumbent Worker Participants who Completed Training Activities that Advanced into a New Position - 178

TARGETED POPULATIONS
★ Unemployed, underemployed, and incumbent workers
★ Low-income, individuals facing barrier to employment
★ Dislocated workers

TARGETED INDUSTRY
Advanced Manufacturing

PARTNERS
★ Employers and Industry Representatives: Calumet Area Industrial Commission (CAIA); Chicago Metal Manufacturing Consortium (CMMC); IBEW-NECA Technical Institute of the Electrical Joint Apprenticeship and Training Trust; Sheet Metal Workers Local 73 Apprentice and Journeymen’s Training Fund (SMART); CRRC Sifang America, Inc.; Ford Motor Company; ArcelorMittal S.A.; Tower Automotive; Sherwin-Williams
★ Workforce Boards: Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership (CCWP); WIOA Service Providers CAIC; Chicago Federation of Labor Workforce and Community Initiatives (CFLWCI)
★ Economic Development Agencies: City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development; Cook County Bureau of Economic Development
★ Education and Training Providers: Richard J. Daley College; Prairie State College; IBEW; SMART
★ Others: AFLCIO Working for America Institute; Transportation Learning Center; Jobs to Move America; Jobs for the Future

ACHIEVEMENTS
★ The Next Gen Partnership, led by manufacturing leaders, celebrated its one year anniversary and is still going strong.
★ Manufacturing Bridge programs with local high schools
★ Over 300 enrolled and have started training

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS
★ Equipping local workers with skills for high paying manufacturing jobs
★ Building employer led collaboration on workforce strategies
★ Creating greater awareness of manufacturing as a career choice.
★ On the job and apprenticeship development
Ruben Miraz – Manufacturing Bridge Program Participant

Ruben Miraz is a recent graduate of George Washington High School, where he first learned about the Bridge Program through Calumet Area Industrial Commission (CAIC). At the time, he was a part-time employee at McDonalds, where he earned minimum wage. Like many high school students, Ruben wasn’t sure what he wanted to do after he graduated, but was certain that the traditional college route wasn’t for him. For Ruben, “CAIC presented the right opportunity at the right time” when they introduced the Bridge program and brought in South Chicago automotive parts manufacturer, Flex N’ Gate, to talk to the students about the industry and introduce different career paths. This manufacturing reality check ultimately changed many misconceptions about manufacturing jobs. Ruben’s attention was captured by the presentation, especially when he learned of the automation and robotics opportunities in manufacturing.

The idea of earning trade certifications at no charge, plus assistance with job placement in roles with growth potential, appealed to Ruben. Through the Bridge program, he earned his OSHA 10 Safety card, Forklift Operator certification, Lean Manufacturing certificate and completed the Manufacturing Certification class. Ruben is very appreciative of the doors this program has opened for him: “The Bridge Program is a great opportunity for high school kids who don’t want to go to college – it has been life changing for me. Thank you CAIC for connecting me with the resources to start a rewarding career.” After going through one week of paid training and serving as a temporary part-time employee at Flex n’ Gate, Ruben accepted a full time position as a Machine Operator, where he earns $15 per hour with full benefits. He plans to grow in his career with Flex N’ Gate and later earn advanced certifications in automation and robotics.

Amanda Peloquin – Manufacturing Bridge Program Participant

Amanda Peloquin is a 44 year old mother of two and wife from the Pullman District in Chicago. Throughout her career as an Esthetician she moved multiple times, resulting in a loss of clients. In order to support her family, she came to the realization that she had to try something else. She became a seasonal motorcycle instructor, tried to self-study mechanics and attempted to join the pipefitters union – all with little success. It wasn’t until Amanda was introduced to the Chairman of Calumet Area Industrial Commission (CAIC), through a connection her husband shared, that she started to see a light at the end of the tunnel. She learned about that the Bridge Program, which caters to adults who are in transitional phases in their career. She was excited to learn that she could earn pipefitter and welding certifications, and even more motivated to learn that that it would be of no cost to her.

With the help of the America’s Promise grant, Amanda is currently enrolled at Prairie State College where she is earning 6 different certifications: 2 in welding, 2 in machining, 1 in computer numerical control (CNC) and another in computer-aided design (CAD) Drafting. She is a straight A student and will graduate from the program in approximately 1 year. She is loving school, making new friends and appreciates the help and encouragement from the staff at Prairie State College and the CAIC. “If it were not for the help of CAIC and the Bridge Program, I would’ve been stuck. The program gives me so many opportunities to pursue different career paths I wouldn’t have otherwise considered,” said Amanda. She is interested in pursuing a CNC career and advancing in her field. She is not sure where she will land, but she is confident she will have the skills and training to land a fulfilling career by the time she graduates.