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Media Contact:

Bobbi Miller
Fox Valley Workforce Development Board, Inc.
Call/Text: 920-470-0837
bmiller@fvwddb.com
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Fox Valley Workforce Board Honors Press Brake Grads; Fast Forward Grant & Employer Partnership Made It Work

DWD Secretary Caleb Frostman and Lt. Governor Mandela Barnes Scheduled to Attend

The Fox Valley Workforce Development Board (FVWDB) will honor the final cohort of press brake trainees in a graduation ceremony planned for 3-4:30 pm on Tuesday, October 22, at Wald Wiring & Manufacturing Co., 2045 W. 20th Ave, Oshkosh. This is the fourth and final cohort of 6 graduates to be certified in press brake operations. Sponsoring employers were Wald Wire & Manufacturing Co., Muza Metal Products and SMC Metal Fabricators, all of Oshkosh.

According to Dan Ruedinger, President at SMC, "The press brake training partnership has been very valuable to both SMC and our employees. The program provides the underlying knowledge required for a skill set that's critical to our success, and it sets the employees up in a skilled trade for the rest of their careers. It's a great example of all parties working together to serve each other's needs."

Trainees received 54 hours of customized instruction from Fox Valley Technical College. In addition, trainees worked closely with company mentors to compliment and reinforce what they learned in class with an additional 54 hours of mentoring during classroom training and also an additional 80 hours of mentoring after classroom training had completed. Training provided instruction on basic and advanced press brake training with a strong focus on safety. Outcomes for the companies include increased manufacturing capacity due to having more trained operators. For trainees, this provided career advancement.

“Fox Valley Technical College’s Business and Industry Services team is honored to partner with the Fox Valley Workforce Development Board to address key training needs in advanced manufacturing,” says Dr. Chris Matheny, executive vice-president of FVTC. “Together we mobilize recourses to ensure that our employer partners have the necessary talent to grow their operations.”

This training was made possible due to a Wisconsin Fast Forward Grant from the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development. FVWDB received \$110,194 award to train a total of 24 employees in the operation of a press brake. By using a press brake to form a part from a single piece of steel sheeting, rather than welding parts together, these manufacturers keep production costs competitive. Currently, the lack of trained press brake operators is making our region less likely to hit its economic potential.

"These students have a great start on a strong career pathway thanks in large part to the dedication of their employers, the local workforce development board, and their local technical college," said Secretary-designee Caleb Frostman. "We are excited that

Wisconsin Fast Forward played an integral role in this training and are proud to take part in the celebration."

A Wisconsin Fast Forward Grant is one in which the DWD matches financial commitments from partner employers. The program has tough metrics, requiring all employees to not only complete the program and demonstrate proficiency, but the company must also provide each employee with a salary increase within a set period of time.

"A Fast Forward Grant is a not a giveaway, but a highly competitive and closely monitored investment in Wisconsin workers," said Anthony Snyder, FVWDB CEO. "We see Fast Forward Grants as the catalyst to bring together coalitions of local employers to tackle their most urgent training needs." Since 2013, the Fox Valley Workforce Development Board has worked with local employers in its six county area of Calumet, Green Lake, Fond du Lac, Waupaca, Waushara and Winnebago, to bring in more than \$1 million in Fast Forward Grant dollars.

"Fast Forward Grants provide us with critical resources to drive significant economic development in our area," said Snyder. "We're always eager to bring those dollars home to ensure our employers remain vital."

DWD's Fast Forward grants are expected to restart in 2020 and will be awarded quarterly in a variety of business sectors. If you are interested in learning more, contact Bobbi Miller, FVWDB Business Services Manager, at bmiller@fvwdb.com or 920-470-0837.

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Fox Valley Workforce Development Board (FVWDB) is a not-for-profit working to build a world-class workforce in northeast Wisconsin. Serving six counties — Calumet, Green Lake, Fond du Lac, Waupaca, Waushara and Winnebago — FVWDB collaborates with a number of state and local agencies to help job seekers gain the skills needed to find employment, and to help businesses find the highly skilled workers they need.

FVWDB is an Equal Opportunity Employer and Service Provider.

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