Belmont’s Milpower Source partnering with community college to develop skilled manpower

Ask entrepreneurs across the state and they’ll tell you advanced manufacturing has long been the unsung hero of the N.H. economy. Add just 100 jobs in the state’s largest economic sector, wrote the N.H. Center for Public Policy Studies in 2011, and you could see a total economic boost of $102 million a year, far exceeding the impact of other private industries.

The story is good for individual workers, too, with average weekly wages in the industry soaring to nearly $250 more than the average of wages in all other private N.H. industries. Thus, it might be a surprise to hear hiring managers say a major growth obstacle isn’t demand for products, but a workforce shortage.

The challenge? Over the last two decades, manufacturing in New Hampshire has morphed into a high-tech economic giant, but the science, technology, engineering and mathematics skills of job seekers have not kept up, hiring managers say. And they need help.

That’s where the Community College System of NH, under the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training grant, has stepped in. Working in partnership with advanced manufacturers, each of the system’s colleges is expanding or developing new advanced manufacturing labs, equipment and curricula to directly meet the needs of the industry.

Milpower Source of Belmont is one of those partners. It’s a small company with a big job and since 1984, has been a global force in the design, manufacture and service of power supplies for aerospace, defense and commercial specifications.

While Milpower Source can boast of worldwide impact, its staff of fewer than 50 people has built strong working relationships and the company prides itself on a family atmosphere.

Here, we meet Jennifer Winfrey, manager of human resources for Milpower Source.

Q: Describe a product you manufacture and the effect it has on consumers’ lives.
A: Our uninterrupted power supplies (UPS) and converters have attracted clients like Northrop Grumman; Raytheon; Honeywell; U.S. Army Navy and Air force; NASA; Boeing; and many others. They are used in fighter jets, military ground vehicles, radars, tanks, missiles, unmanned aircrafts, ships and satellites.

Q: What does the future have in store for the Milpower Source workforce?
A: Many of the employees here at MPS have been with the company for a number of years—some since the company opened in 1984. While that’s of great benefit, it also raises concern. Retirement is approaching for some of these long-term employees, and it’s difficult to find people with the right skills to satisfy our specific manufacturing needs.

Q: How have you partnered with Lakes Region Community College to help build the workforce?
A: To be successful in your position in life, you must be the solution to a problem. In New Hampshire’s Lakes Region, a lack of manufacturing manpower is a problem, and I firmly believe the advanced manufacturing program at Lakes Region Community College is a big step forward toward solving that problem. So, when the college reached out to us last year to invite us to take part in developing and updating advanced manufacturing curricula, we were happy to do whatever we could.

Q: Who should choose a career in advanced manufacturing in New Hampshire?
A: Simply, confident, hardworking, intelligent men and women who have a desire to create something and to be a part of something significant. There is a demand here.

To learn about advanced manufacturing training and academic programs at Lakes Region Community College, email TAACCCT project coordinator Don Brough at dbrough@ccsnh.edu. To learn more about CCSNH advancements under the TAACCCT grant, e-mail marketing coordinator Desiree Crossley at dcrossley@ccsnh.edu. To learn more about Milpower Source, visit www.milpower.com or email Jennifer@milpower.com.