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NORTHWEST STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND PUTNAM COUNTY PARTNER TO OFFER TRADE-UP PRE-APPRENTICESHIP

ARCHBOLD, OHIO – As the old adage goes, good things come to those who wait. The wait in Putnam County is over as the Trade Up Pre-Apprenticeship began on August 25th, with nine students joining Putnam County’s first manufacturing pre-apprenticeship. According to Apprentice Ohio, this pre-apprenticeship is only the 7th in northwest Ohio, which is comprised of 23 counties. The program was 14 months in the making, and is in partnership with OhioMeansJobs-Putnam County, Putnam County Community Improvement Corporation, Production Products Inc., Columbus Grove High School, Ottawa-Glandorf High School, Leipsic High School, and Northwest State Community College.

A state registered pre-apprenticeship is designed to offer high school students the ability to not only take industry specific courses, but also allows for on the job training and work experiences. The Trade Up pre-apprenticeship will see students earn their OSHA 30-hour credential, and then take hands-on courses in benchwork, machine repair, and industrial electricity. These specific courses were chosen to provide in-demand skills to the learners and meet the needs of Production Products Inc. Another qualifying factor for a pre-apprenticeship is the direct linkage to a state registered apprenticeship. This is key, as it presents a pathway for learners once they have completed the pre-apprenticeship.

Suzy Wischmeyer, Director of OhioMeansJobs-Putnam County, has been at the table from the beginning of the process. Her office continues to be a valuable asset for this program, and are assisting in making connections and providing funding for this opportunity. Wischmeyer said, *“In pre-apprenticeship programs the OMJ staff connect the employer with the local high school guidance counselors and superintendents who supply the pipeline for the program. The OMJ Office keeps the momentum going from start to finish by making sure all the employer needs are met, the student’s needs are met, and that the students are successful and marketable for the workforce.”*

Production Products Inc. falls under the Midway Products Group. The Columbus Grove based company is a tier one automotive supplier, with their primary operations focusing on die stamping, deep draw, automated assemble, and robotic spot welding. Tina Siewert, Human Resources Manager at PPI Inc., has been key to the success of this partnership. She understands the importance of building a pipeline for skilled labor to her facility, and then ultimately retaining that talent. *“When I started with PPI in January, 2019, we needed to create a pipeline for entry-level manufacturing. We needed to promote our business to the local community as many people did not know what we did. We needed to create growth opportunities for our own internal employees. This pre-apprenticeship program will provide training, support services, and career navigation assistance to help these students gain the skills and awareness they need to enter and succeed in the local workforce,”* Siewert said.

Tori Atkinson, Director of Workforce Development and Innovative Learning Northwest State Community College, was instrumental in educating all partners on what a pre-apprenticeship is, why it is important, and how the opportunity benefits the community. She developed the schedule for the pre-apprenticeship, and handles all of the necessary paperwork that must be submitted to Apprentice Ohio. Jim Drewes, the Vice President of Workforce at NSCC, was also key in both educating all involved. Jim worked with OhioMeansJobs to assist with funding for the program, and also assisted with classes, equipment, and developing relationships with the local schools, economic development office, and Production Products Inc. Drewes noted, *“This is a great win for Putnam County. All the partners were flexible and easy to work with. Anytime you*

have this many parties at the table, we all have to be rowing in the same direction, and this groups main focus is quality opportunities for local students and meeting the local workforce needs.”

The three participating school districts are excited about this opportunity for their students. All three administrations have been at the table and have assisted with scheduling, class times, and with getting students involved. Brian Bennett, Principal of Leipsic High School had this to say about the opportunity: *“This partnership is a great opportunity for our seniors to get real world skills in today's job market. Our students will not only get work experience from a local, well-established business, but they will also earn industry credentials and college credit for their hard work in the program.”* Nick Verhoff, Superintendent of Columbus Grove Local Schools, echoed Principal Bennett’s excitement: *“This program provides an excellent chance for our students to acquire important work credentials, build a work history, and make money while fulfilling high school requirements. This partnership is a benefit to the district, as students, many times can’t find stable and sustaining employment. This opportunity only enhances the tax base in the community in which we live.”*

If your business or school is interested in learning more about apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships, call Tori Atkinson at (419) 267-1219.

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Northwest State Community College is an accredited two-year, state-assisted institution of higher education that has served northwest Ohio since 1969. Northwest State is committed to providing a quality, affordable education with personal attention and small class sizes. The College offers associate degrees with numerous transfer options, short-term certificate programs, and workforce training programs designed to meet the needs of local businesses and industries. For more information, visit NorthwestState.edu or call 419.267.5511.

