



Fostering Diversity in Manufacturing: Creating an Inclusive Talent Pipeline

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THE UNIQUELY ABLED ACADEMY
NORTHWEST PENNSYLVANIA: ERIE & MEADVILLE UAAs

Introduction

Greg Wasko

Executive Vice President

Starn Family of companies

- Starn Tool and Manufacturing Co.
- Mecal by Starn
- Penn Weld, Inc.
- Starn Marketing Group
- Starn Technical Services



Manufacturing's Challenge

- DEPLETING WORKFORCE
 - Projected 2.1 million unfilled jobs by 2030 nationwide
 - “Silver Tsunami” – retirement of an entire manufacturing generation
 - “College push” in years past
 - Lack of skilled labor
 - 1.4 million manufacturing jobs were lost during COVID-19 pandemic nationwide

Programs and Solutions

- Employee Pipeline – local technical centers
- Apprenticeship programs – National Tooling & Machining Association
- Cooperative Education Programs thru high schools
- Local Job Connect/workforce development programs – On the Job Training and other tax credits
- Local NTMA (Northwest PA National Tooling and Machining Association)
- Academic Outreach Events
- RoboBOTS
- Educator in the Workplace

- **UNIQUELY ABLED ACADEMY!**

UNIQUELY ABLED ACADEMY

- How it started:
 - Initial conversations with Ivan Rosenberg from an NTMA event
 - Involving the local workforce development programs/individuals to get the program off the ground
- Posed Difficulties:
 - Rural Setting – transportation for those unable to drive
 - Host School – scheduling program to be completed in the same timeframe as existing UAA programs
- Outcomes
 - Transportation was worked out through city bussing options and appreciative parents for the opportunity for the children
 - UAA flexibility allowed for program to adjust the weeks of learning and the hours to accommodate the availability of instructs/learning space

Host-School & Logistics

- Host School is Crawford Tech
- Funding Support
 - America Works
 - Business Education Partnership Grant

100% supported by the Employment and Training Administration of the US Department of Labor as part of an award totaling \$60,320 and \$10,000 America Works Minigrant with 0% and \$0 funded from non-governmental sources.

- Program Coordinator
- Application Process
- Program Details



Crawford County Career & Technical Center



The Uniquely Abled Academy

Training people with special skills for specialized needs in the workforce.

Host-School & Logistics



ERIE COUNTY
COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF PA

- Host School is Erie County Community College (EC3)
- Funding Support
 - Erie Community Foundation
 - Business Education Partnership Grant

Supported in part by the Employment and Training Administration of the U.S. Department of Labor as part of an award totaling \$60,320.00. 37% (\$19,000.00) with federal funding, which is 34% of the total award, and 63% (\$32,000.00) funded by non-governmental sources via a grant from the Erie Community Foundation.

- Program Coordinator
- Application Process



**The Uniquely Abled
Academy**

*Training people with special skills for specialized
needs in the workforce.*

Our Experience

- How much extra time/effort/expenses?
 - No more than any other new hire with minimal experience
 - Students are educated and willing to work and learn – employers must embrace
 - Additional tax credits are available to assist with any education needed
- Do the UAA graduates fit in as employees?
 - YES!
 - Existing employees have embraced their unique talents and have empowered them in their careers
- Can they function as part of the team?
 - YES!
 - They want to work to be a part of something – educating current workforce to how their minds work/their capabilities is KEY!

Our Experience

- How is attendance and work ethic?
 - FANTASTIC!
 - They are better than you could ever expect! They have a routine and they STICK TO IT!
- Can they learn new skills and be cross trained?
 - ABSOLUTELY!
 - Just like any employee – ensuring the right fit and proper training, they are capable of extraordinary things!

AARON TOMCHO

- HIRED AT STARN TOOL & MANUFACTURING
- HIRED IN 2023
- INSPECTION

- “The UAA has brought one of the hardest working and most detail-oriented employees that we have. He continues to grow every day and is willing to learn and perform any task that is asked. Mecal by Starn is proud to have this young gentleman on our team and is excited to see what his future holds”
-Zach Tinko – Manufacturing Manager – Mecal By Starn



Conclusion

- UAA has...
 - been a KEY development in Crawford County for the manufacturing industry
 - opened an entirely NEW employee pipeline that had NO previous participation
 - congregated our community, organizations and employers
 - created the path for the achievement of a common goal
 - opened the minds of the community to work on NEW initiatives to slow the gap of a diminishing workforce!

Thank You!