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Monday, March 26, 2007

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Secretary Gassman awards grant for advanced manufacturing academies \$175,000 will introduce youth in West Central Wisconsin to rewarding, high-tech careers

Eau Claire – Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman today announced a \$175,000 grant to create four summer career academies in manufacturing that will introduce youth in west central Wisconsin to rewarding careers in advanced manufacturing.

“Just as we are identified as America’s Dairyland, Wisconsin remains a strong manufacturing state that produces goods sold the world over,” Secretary Gassman said. “Despite some job losses in manufacturing, our students need to know there are great opportunities for rewarding careers in manufacturing, especially advanced manufacturing, for our young students who are talented, motivated, and eager to learn and apply high-tech skills. This grant will help introduce them to a new manufacturing era in Wisconsin and keep Wisconsin at the forefront of manufacturing in today’s global economy.”

Secretary Gassman said the summer academies would be similar to the Youth Apprenticeship program, offering high school students classroom instruction and work experience during the school year.

“These career academies complement the popular, successful Youth Apprenticeship program, and the Governor’s new two-year budget will double Youth Apprenticeship funding to \$2.2 million a year, providing 4,000 students school-to-work opportunities,” Secretary Gassman said. “Governor Doyle has made investing in people, their education and training, his priority starting with the successful Grow Wisconsin initiative early in his first term and continuing with his latest budget, an opportunity budget for working families and businesses.”

Wisconsin received nearly \$714,000 in federal Workforce Investment Act incentive funding for exceeding performance standards, such as job placement after training, job retention and improvement in literacy. Of 23 states to receive incentive funding awards, only 8 received more than Wisconsin. The incentive performance award is being used to fund grants for four regional projects.

Secretary Gassman presented the \$175,000 grant to the West Central Wisconsin Regional Development Coalition, which includes:

- West Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Board;
- Chippewa Valley Technical College (CVTC), CVTC Tech Prep Consortium Council; and Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College;
- Cooperative Educational Service Agencies: CESA 10 and CESA 11;
- Northwest Wisconsin Manufacturing Outreach Center;
- Manufacturing Works;
- West Central Wisconsin Regional Education Consortium; and Northwest Wisconsin Tech Prep School-to-Work Consortium;
- OEM Fabricators, Inc.

Secretary Gassman announced the grant during a visit to the NanoRite Center for Innovation at the Chippewa Valley Technical College at the Gateway Campus in Eau Claire. She said the academies will set students on a career path that includes instruction at CVTC and lab work at the NanoRite Center. The center not only provides students a high tech lab for the latest research and study, but serves as an incubator for business innovation and high-tech startups. OEM, a partner in the academy project, has space reserved at the center.

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The coalition plans to offer four summer manufacturing career academies for 90 students from a minimum of eight school districts. At the summer academies, the students can earn credit for instruction and on-the-job training, learning manufacturing skills, exploring career options and charting pathways to achieve their goals.

In addition to the academies, the coalition project includes the following:

- Developing a K-12 Teacher Externship program and Summer Learning Communities, providing the region's teachers two opportunities to connect with manufacturers, learn about career opportunities for students, the skills students will need, and draw on their "externship" experience or summer learning sessions to guide students interested in manufacturing careers;
- Adapting or enhancing school curriculum to prepare students to meet the new national Manufacturing Skill Standards Council (MSSC) certification and strengthening links between school systems – school districts, the Wisconsin Technical College System and the University of Wisconsin System – to recognize credits and advanced standing of students successfully completing academy and related courses.