

Workforce Retraining Program

Graduates First Class From Food Manufacturing Science Program

By: Judy Winkler, NCWWDB Communications Coordinator

Eighteen WIA Dislocated Workers were enrolled in the Food Manufacturing Science Certificate (FMSC) program and the Manufacturing Skills Standard Certification program at MSTC, and recently completed their programs. A completion celebration was held on July 25, 2011, at Mid-State Technical College in Wisconsin Rapids.

This unique, industry-driven and partnership funded program retrained these 18 workers with the specific skills needed by local food processing manufacturers. It was developed with input from area business leaders in partnership with MSTC, NCWWDB, Workforce Central Advanced Manufacturing Partnership, and a core group of the area's workforce service provider network including LETC; Workforce Solutions; Social Innovation Fund; Community Foundation of South Wood County; and others to fund this specialized, industry-specific training.

As part of the 23-week certificate program, students earned 20 Mid-State Technical College credits for 472 hours of instruction in three areas—computer skills, Manufacturing Skill Standards Certification and food science—through a curriculum a group of local businesses helped create to suit their need for skilled workers.

“The credits students earned in the program also can ladder toward a laboratory science technician degree,” Mid-State Technical College President, Sue Budjac said.

Mariani Packing Co., formerly Urban Processing, is one of eight local manufacturers involved in the Advanced Manufacturing Partnership and recently hired three of the 18 students in the certificate program as summer interns, said Jeff Pozorski, Human Resources Manager for the Wisconsin Rapids cranberry processor. "It's a good opportunity for people in the food industry," Pozorski said, noting company leaders previously had trouble finding workers who had skills in not only manufacturing but also in food processing. “When you see an applicant with food manufacturing (experience), that's a step up than somebody with just manufacturing,” he continued. “This program can provide workers the skills that make a difference in getting a job in one of the area’s many food manufacturing companies such as Ocean Spray Cranberries, Mariani, and McCain Foods.”

Three of the students are working as interns at Mariani, which is planning a plant expansion in the fall to meet the growing need for sweetened and dried cranberries, Pozorski said.

Looking across the students, Pozorski didn't think it would be the last time they'd meet. I'm looking forward to working with some of you down the road,” he said during his speech.

Workforce Central, LETC, NCWWDB, and MSTC have been assigned to help coordinate activities between the manufacturing businesses and partners to ensure the FMSC students are connected to employment opportunities and available training. The next FMSC class is scheduled to begin at MSTC's Wisconsin Rapids campus, on August 29th.

Photos from this event have been posted on North Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Board's Facebook page [HERE](#). If you don't have a Facebook account you can also view the photos as a slideshow [HERE](#).