

“Thinking Locally, Acting Globally—Connecting Business, Education and WorkForce/Economic Development”

Washington County WorkForce Investment Board Forum

1. Overview

The Washington County WorkForce Investment Board (WIB) held its second forum, “Thinking Locally, Acting Globally--Connecting Business, Education, and WorkForce/Economic Development” on June 21, 2006, with 187 people in attendance. It was a gathering of the WIB, business, civic and education leaders who were invited to discuss the future of the workforce in the county.

The future will be one of profound change, the keynote speakers told the audience. Dr. Linda Baer, senior vice chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs with the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MNSCU), and Dr. Tom Gillaspay, state demographer, gave a glimpse into the future. Baer referenced Thomas Friedman’s book, “The World is Flat” an exploration of the forces of globalization and what it will mean for future workers. Dr. Baer presented information on how Minnesota can compete in the global economy. Dr. Gillaspay shared his insights on the retiring Baby Boomer workforce and the shortage of replacement workers, and its impact on the economy. He emphasized we cannot live in the moment, we must plan for the future.

Questions from the audience were addressed by a panel of experts that included Charles Arnold, executive director of the Minnesota Precision Manufacturing Association (MPMA); Trudy Knoepke-Campbell, workforce planning for HealthEast Care Systems; Mike Ericson, administrator, City of Hugo; and Keith Ryskoski, superintendent of the Stillwater Area Public Schools.

The event also included demonstrations by current students (our future workforce) at Oak-Land Junior High School, who showed visitors the public service videos they had made during the school year, and the Midwest Robotics League (which helps prepare students for careers in engineering and machining) students who demonstrated robots they had built.

To support the MWCA’s goals, the Washington County WIB focused its efforts on supporting the development of programs that ensure both employers (businesses) and workers have the resources and skills needed to be competitive. Feedback about qualified worker shortages from businesses visited by the Business Services Staff, along with the realization that there is a disconnect between student and parent perception of what manufacturing jobs can be, resulted in the WIB’s development of their 2006 WIB Forum. The Forum brought together representatives from Education, Business and WorkForce/Economic Development to share their views on the current and expected labor shortages. Through demonstrations by MPMA and the Midwest Robotics League, those in attendance learned of new opportunities to develop students’ interest and skills in jobs that face worker shortages, as well as new ways to market the industry and job openings to potential workers.

2. Jobseeker Impact

It is because we are always looking for innovative ways to increase employment possibilities for job seekers that our WIB's Business and Marketing committee featured the collaborative work of the MPMA and the Midwest Robotics League. These two groups have taken steps to introduce students to the "fun" side of learning math and science in preparation for careers in manufacturing, healthcare, finance, transportation and professional services—all key industries identified by the WIB. It is our hope that the results of this work, along with continued partnering and featuring of these businesses in Washington County, will spark the interest of current job seekers coming into the WorkForce Center to search for work.

3. Community Impact

We are always looking for ways to meet the workforce needs of businesses across Washington County. The information presented had a direct impact on the way business is thinking about replacing Baby Boomers. Continuing education is key to the success of all members of communities. Businesses and cities across the county commented on strategies they will employ to ensure their continued success.

4. Identification/Collaborators

MNSCU, MN Precision Manufacturing Association, Midwest Robotics League, City of Hugo, Washington County WorkForce Investment Board, MN Dept of Employment and Economic Development, HealthEast, and the Stillwater Area School District. This partnership has further spurred the determination of individuals to continue educating students and employees about the evolving workforce and labor market trends.

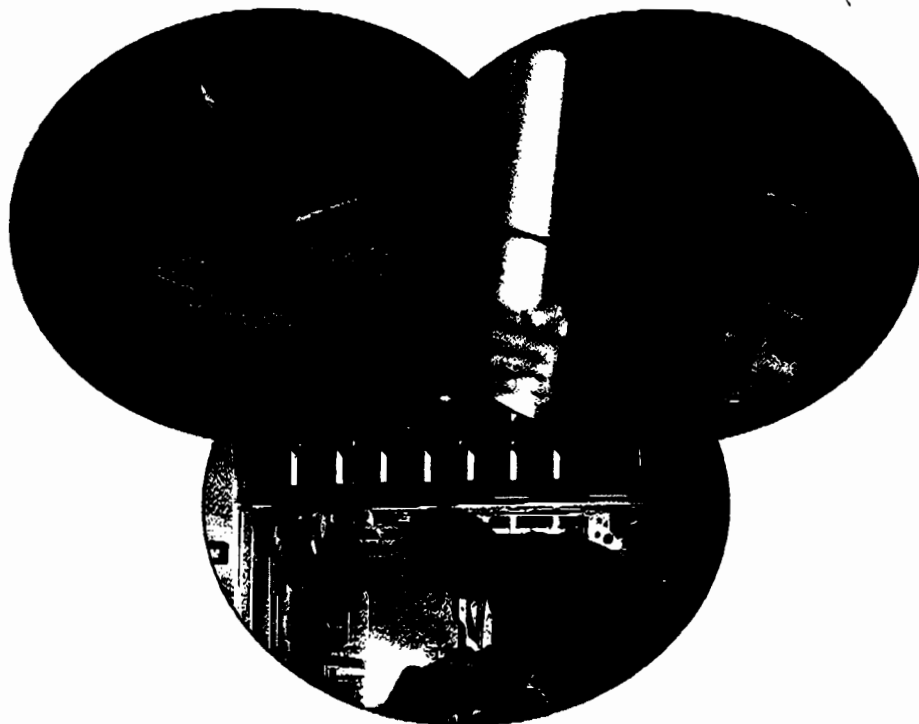
5. Outside Resources

Many hours were dedicated to the success of this forum. Without the support of the keynote speakers, the panel of experts, the Midwest Robotics League students and the students from Oak-Land Jr. High School, the forum would not have been successful. The WIB strongly believes that collaborations are key to the success of Washington County and the State of Minnesota.

6. Ability to Replicate

This program was videotaped and CD's created with the assistance of the City of Oakdale. A complete narrative documentation has been written by the WIB. This forum grew from the Economic Development forum the WIB held in 2005 and from the collaborations that developed the Robotics Academy and the Precision Manufacturing Career Exploration programs that were held this year.

CONNECTING BUSINESS, EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



FORUM AGENDA

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| <p>10:30— Networking, displays: 11:00 Midwest Robotics League</p> <p>Oak-Land Junior High School Students— Stillwater Area Public Schools</p> <p>11:00 Welcome & Acknowledgements: Robert Crawford, Manager, Washington County Workforce Center</p> <p>Opening Remarks: Jeanne Swanson, Chair Washington County Workforce Investment Board</p> <p>11:15 Dr. Linda Baer Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs (MnSCU)</p> <p>11:30 Dr. Tom Gillaspay Minnesota State Demographer</p> <p>11:45 Questions and Answers</p> | <p>12:00 Introduction of Panel Members:</p> <p>Charles Arnold, Executive Director Minnesota Precision Manufacturing Assn.</p> <p>Keith Ryskoski, Superintendent Stillwater Area Public Schools</p> <p>Trudy Knoepke-Campbell, Director Workforce Planning, HealthEast Care Systems</p> <p>Mike Ericson, City Administrator City of Hugo, Minnesota</p> <p>12:15 Questions from Audience and Discussion Moderator: Freeman Beasley</p> <p>1:00 Conclusion: Robert L. Crawford, Manager Washington County Workforce Center</p> |
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