

# Tour

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and economic specialist. "In April, we met with Gov. (Dennis) Daugaard and (Pat Costello, commissioner of the South Dakota Governor's Office of Economic Development) and decided as a group that maybe we could bring recruiters to the area to showcase it and make them aware of the needs of our employers.

"Each one of these communities is unique and has so much to offer. We wanted (these recruiters) to see that. It's building awareness. It's a beginning, and we hope to build on it. We may do another tour."

Bertsch said Advantage South Dakota will speak with the communities visited during the tour, as well as the recruiters, and decide if it was worth the energy put into it. "I think it was," he stated.

Representatives of Applied Engineering, Kolberg Pioneer, Inc.; the Regional Technical Education Center; the Yankton Area Chamber of Commerce; and the Yankton Office of Economic Development were on hand for the meeting held at JoDean's Steak House and Lounge.

"Every avenue that is available to grow our workforce and to find out what (these recruiters) can add to the equation to attract individuals and grow, we welcome," said Rick Duimstra, the finance and human resource manager at Applied Engineering. "We appreciate Advantage South Dakota putting this together and getting these recruiters out here."

Applied Engineering has approximately a half-dozen job openings, he stated.

"There are lots of opportunities in Yankton and South Dakota to grow," Duimstra said. "One of the constraints we have is being able to attract additional workers like we currently have. I truly feel that part of the answer is doing what we are here in Yankton (during South Dakota Manufacturing Week). We're trying to educate parents, grandparents, kids and the general public as to what the opportunities are here."

Various manufacturing plants have opened their doors to the public for tours during the week, and other educational efforts are also under way.

Zach Tuft of Aerotek said the tour has been an eye-opening experience for him. Aerotek fulfills contract, contract-to-hire and direct placement staffing needs in a wide variety of areas, including engineering and manufacturing. "I think it has been

wonderful," he stated. "It has been unbelievable to see how gracious these communities are and how passionate people are about their communities. We didn't realize how many good companies are in these cities that build products that go around the world. I think the tour has been very impactful."

Kyle Thomforde, also of Aerotek, said the company typically serves businesses within an hour of Sioux Falls with some exceptions.

"It's more about the size of the company than the town (that determines if we can offer services)," he stated.

Both men visited communities on the tour they had not previously seen. Machinists and welders are the positions that seem to be the most needed, they said.

"With the communities we've been traveling to with bigger corporations, I see that as an opportunity," Tuft said.

South Dakota companies have been making adjustments to survive in the current economy, where skilled workers can be scarce, the men said.

"There are some companies in South Dakota that have realized they need to raise their wages and have been doing it," Thomforde stated.

Tuft added, "I've seen more companies raise their pay rates in the last six months than I have in the last seven years I've been here."

You can follow Nathan Johnson on Twitter at [twitter.com/AnInlandVoyage](http://twitter.com/AnInlandVoyage). Discuss this story at [www.yankton.net/](http://www.yankton.net/).

# Mining

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and I'm glad I made the move."

Despite the lack of past manufacturing experience, Schulte said the job has taught him a lot.

"I came in here not knowing about the manufacturing aspect," he said. "It's been a huge learning curve, I've enjoyed it and I've met a lot of new people."

Also a part of Dakota Trailer's radiator division is Team Leader Steve Meteer, who is involved with welding.

Meteer said a change of jobs brought him there six years ago.

"I was switching jobs and I heard they were hiring," he said. "They're good people to work for and treat everyone fairly."

Currently, the company has two operations in Yankton employing 100 people, 25 of which work at the shared L&M facility. Clients include major heavy-lift companies such as Caterpillar.

The joint Dakota Trailer-L&M plant, located on West City Limits Road, is split into two sections. One half, administered by Dakota Trailer, is in charge of assembling and welding the radiator frames. After quality control inspections, the frames are then sent to the other side of the plant, where they are cleaned and painted before having components installed and being prepared for shipment.

Meteer said the time a product takes to go through the factory depends on the type of radiator, but the actual frame assembly usually takes one to two days before the frame is sent to the L&M section.

Meteer spends his days making sure the product is good enough quality to move on to the next step in the process.

"I check a lot of measurements," Meteer said. "I make sure everybody's putting everything on correctly and I make sure that the product we send over to the L&M company is in good shape and good quality."

Schulte's job begins around 6 a.m. each day going over the schedule before meeting with



COURTESY PHOTO

This is a photo of a D11T Cat from the recent World Mining Expo in Las Vegas which officials from Dakota Trailer attended with officials from L&M Radiator. The D11T was built in part by the two firms.

L&M to give a status report on the frames.

"After that meeting, I spend a lot of time out on the floor with the employees making sure everything's going good," Schulte said. "I check to make sure outside vendors are delivering products that they're making for us on time. I just make sure everything runs up to par."

Meteer said the job has improved his welding skills and said the business helps contribute to the community by teaching others this skill.

"Where I welded at before to where I'm welding at now, I've learned so much more about welding," he said. "It's a real good way for someone to help step up their welding experience."

Schulte added the welders working for Dakota Trailer are among the best.

"These welders are some of the best in Yankton," he said. "We hold them to a pretty high standard because they're welding on some of the biggest equipment in the world."

He also said there has been a great impact on the area in general due to the partnership.

"Overall, it's been a huge success for Dakota Trailer as well as the city, offering great jobs for the welders in town," he said.

You can follow Rob Nielsen on Twitter at [twitter.com/RobNielsenPandD/](http://twitter.com/RobNielsenPandD/). Discuss this story at [www.yankton.net/](http://www.yankton.net/)

# Coverage

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eventually sign up at least half of the nearly 50 million uninsured Americans through an expansion of Medicaid or government-subsidized plans.

About 105,000 South Dakotans, or 13 percent of the state's population, are uninsured, according to recent surveys.

Dec. 15 is the deadline to obtain coverage that'll start Jan. 1. Customers have until the end of March to sign up in order to avoid tax penalties.

Overloaded websites and jammed phone lines frustrated consumers nationwide Tuesday on the first day they could sign up.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services spokeswoman Joanne Peters said many Americans successfully enrolled on the first day, but she declined to put a number on it. She said the delays were due to "overwhelming interest" and high volume.

Jones said she talked the coalition's other South Dakota navigators and they, too, have been answering questions and setting up appointments. She said people are taking their time to learn about the whole process.

"I'm not hearing a huge outcry of frustration," Jones said. "I think so far, so good."

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# Tax

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adjust the reserve ratios. Lyons said the new numbers presented Wednesday led him to support \$15,000.

"This is an issue it's easy to feel both ways about," council member Don Kattke of Aberdeen said. He is the past director of the state unemployment insurance division. "If I was sitting here deciding today I could vote for either one," he said.

The Obama administration reportedly wants to require states to be at a wage base of \$15,000.

Carol Hinderaker, a council member from Watertown, said that either way the council is showing its interest in reaching the target amount for the trust fund while providing relief to businesses.

Roberts said businesses that use the system to compensate laid-off workers would pay slightly more into the system using the \$15,000 wage base. At \$15,000 the businesses that don't use the system would receive more relief than at \$14,000, she said.

The Legislature set a schedule in 2009 to gradually raise the wage base to \$15,000 for 2015. That schedule was recommended by the council to the Legislature at that time, council member Rob Anderson of Pierre said.

"I don't know that we'll do anything wrong, no matter what we do here," Anderson said.

Council member Tim Fitzgerald of Rapid City said it's "ironic" that the council would go to \$15,000 on the second day of the federal government's shutdown.

"I guess I see good and bad in both of the things, as does everybody else," Fitzgerald said about the wage-base discussion.

Roberts said the council's collective change of mind is what the process is about. "It wasn't a wasted exercise," she said.