

Technically Speaking

RTEC Has Become Indispensable To Training Labor Force



BY RANDY DOCKENDORF
randy.dockendorf@yankton.net

As executive director, Josh Svatos developed customized “rapid response” training at the Regional Technical Education Center (RTEC). The Yankton campus sought to meet the specific needs of local businesses and workers.

Then came the recession starting in 2008, bringing tough times for most Yankton manufacturers. They needed to adjust quickly to the new realities of the marketplace, while laid-off employees sought new skills or even totally new careers.

RTEC became known not only for training but also retraining. The facility developed new programs for the changing regional workforce.

And now, RTEC offers a manufacturing academy and other programs for young people considering technical careers. Svatos has also taken the RTEC programs on the road, offering outreach programs to area schools and communities.

“With CDBG funds, we set up satellite training facilities out in Gregory and Freeman,” he said. “For those towns, it’s a combination of upgrading people’s existing skills and also taking a new skill set to people.”

RTEC has taken its welding simulator to area towns, such as two Freeman plants, Svatos said.

“We have Rural Manufacturing in Freeman, and Colin Hofer and his staff welcome us with open arms. We train their employees for skill upgrades,” he said. “It’s also in the works to go back to Wildcat Manufacturing (in Freeman) and have a class open to the general public.”

Svatos takes the welding simulator to the Andes Central and Freeman schools, exposing students to different types of welding or manufacturing. The visits also feature the Lego mind storms, which are Lego robotics kits.

“We are trying to expose ourselves to the students at a younger age, at seventh and eighth grade,” he said. “We want them into the mindset of taking a career or tech ed program and not treat it as a consolation prize (compared to college). They are set up for success.”

RTEC also hosts a summer academy that includes manufacturing elements, Svatos said.

“We have kids from schools including Wagner, Vermillion, Avon and Bon Homme,” he said. “We cover the rural areas as much as we possibly can.”

RTEC doesn’t set up sessions in Nebraska schools because of the Husker State’s different educational requirements, Svatos said. However, Nebraska students are welcome to attend — and have taken advantage of — RTEC’s hands-on career expo, summer academy and other offerings.

HELPING SMALL TOWNS

RTEC also provides a feeder system of manufacturing training that may not already exist in rural communities, Svatos said. The training helps meet the challenge of workforce development, he said.

The outreach proves especially valuable for rural manufacturers, who welcome the training offered in their hometowns, Svatos said. They now have opportunities locally, and they and their employees aren’t being forced to travel or miss large amounts of work time.

“We work a lot with area residents, and these (small-town) businesses fill niche markets. That’s why they are so attractive. They find they can do one thing well, and then they build from there,” he said.

“They have that product on a smaller scale, but that doesn’t take away from the quality of work they are producing. At the end of the day, it may be a much smaller scale, but the product they are pushing out the door is as high quality as the big boys are.”

The smaller manufacturers often fill niches that larger companies cannot fill, or the rural plant might serve as a sub-contractor for a larger project such as a government contract, Svatos said.

Rural manufacturing is holding its own, even during the current economic slowdown, Svatos said. The plants often create higher-paying jobs that bring wealth into a community and keep the local schools and services going strong, he said.

The long-term success of rural manufacturing depends on forging a new generation of skilled workers, Svatos said.

“We need to show these kids at a young age that they don’t have to be ashamed of making a career out of a technical field. These are fields where they have good paying jobs and benefits,” he said.

“And we need to have their parents on board. Technical careers and education are not put out as consolation prizes. They

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KELLY HERTZ/P&D
Yankton’s Regional Technical Education Center (RTEC), headed by executive director Josh Svatos, has established itself as a vital component to the training — and retraining — of the local work force. RTEC has been a boon for local manufacturers looking for skilled workers who can learn a particular trade at the Yankton facility. “We work a lot with local residents, and these businesses fill niche markets,” Svatos said. “That’s why it’s so attractive. They find they can do one thing well, and then they build from there.”

Workforce Development Programs Are Key Part To Boosting Economy

BY ANDREW ATWAL
andrew.atwal@yankton.net

As the nation’s economic recovery continues to struggle, Yankton County and surrounding areas have not seen all of the impacts of the stalled economy.

Since March, Yankton County has seen its unemployment rate hover around 4 percent. It has actually fallen from 4.3 percent in March down to 4 percent in June.

In the area, Hutchinson County has had an unemployment rate of under 4 percent since March, while the unemployment rate in Charles Mix has stayed around 5 percent. Bon Homme and Clay counties have seen their unemployment below 5 percent as well.

Dawn Dovre, public affairs director at the Department of Labor and Regulation, said Gov. Dennis Daugaard’s South Dakota Workforce Initiatives (SD WINS) could be having a big impact on the economy.

“SD WINS is Gov. Daugaard’s 20-point plan to address short- and long-term workforce needs,” she said. “SD WINS is a collaborative effort of business, education, health and labor leaders to create a well-trained and well-educated workforce for the job market of today and tomorrow.”

SD WINS is a program that brings together government, education and business leaders to capitalize on many of the state’s offerings. The program should help South Dakota develop and attract a stronger, more educated workforce, which will also help the state to compete in the continuously changing global economy.

Some of the highest growing labor fields in South Dakota include fabricated metal product manufacturing, which is expected to grow by about 17 percent by 2020. Computer and electronic product manufacturing is expected to grow by nearly 16 percent by 2020. Machinery manufacturing workers are expected to grow nearly 13 percent during the next eight years, while transportation equipment manufacturing employee numbers are projected to increase by nearly 14 percent.

Also from 2010-2020, the fastest growing industries in the state are projected to be



ambulatory health care services (a 28.5 percent expected increase), waste management and remediation service (a projected 23.4 percent increase), and construction of buildings, which is projected to increase by more than 22 percent.

The industries in South Dakota that are expected to take the sharpest declines by 2020 include private households, an expected 7.5 percent decrease; telecommunications a projected 3.5 percent decrease; and broadcasting (not including Internet), a projected 2.7 percent decrease.

The state Department of Labor (DLR) helps employees that are out of work, or searching for a better opportunity, potentially finding jobs.

“The projects DLR are currently involved in include Dakota Roots, getting people their National Career Readiness Certificates (NCRC) and finding internship opportunities for students,” Dovre said.

There are 18 local DLR offices throughout South Dakota, which provide a wide

range of employer services, including screening and testing job seekers to match business needs, offering job training programs and maintaining South Dakota’s largest job database.

The Yankton DLR office posts job openings in Yankton, Bon Homme and Charles Mix counties, and a few openings in surrounding areas, including Hartington and Crofton.

The DLR notes that there is plentiful job availability right now and there are a variety of job openings, not just for one specific area. New businesses that open in the area will contact the DLR to post job openings online.

“We provide helpful advice with labor laws and other employment issues to employers in the area,” Dovre said. “Our local staff all have close ties with local development groups and other business and labor organizations in order to stay in tune with what’s happening.”

110 Years Ago James Cash Penney Opened His First Store in Kemmerer, Wyoming 2012 We Celebrate 89 Years in Yankton!



Painting of Mr. Penney against backdrop of Kemmerer, Wyoming

Modern jcpenny stores are a far cry from the small dry-goods store that James Cash Penney opened in Kemmerer, Wyoming in 1902. In those days, frontier miners and farmers and their families turned to jcpenny for blue jeans and other work clothes, shoes, fabrics and sewing needs. Today, busy working families turn to jcpenny in cities, towns and suburbs and to jcp.com for affordable fashions and home accessories.

The original Golden Rule store in Kemmerer, Wyoming, 1902.

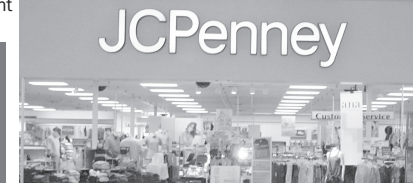
jcpenny’s commitment to serving its customers with style, quality and smart prices has led the Company

through many transformations over the years as society and shopping habits change. Furthermore, through more than 100 years of history, the Company has stayed true to its Golden Rule beginnings, with a continued commitment to care for the communities where it does business in and operate in an ethical and responsible manner. Today these commitments live on in the Company’s dedication to make “Every Day Matters” for all its stakeholders.

YANKTON MALL
665-2714



Jcpenny came to Yankton August 30, 1923. Located here at 3rd & Cedar, Downtown Yankton.



The jcpenny store moved to their present location at the Yankton Mall in 1978.