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Putting People to Work in Medina County

Medina, OH. The Medina County Economic Development Corporation (MCEDC) announced the early results of several workforce initiatives undertaken in the past year to solve the most significant challenge to growth being faced by local businesses: finding enough workers to fill jobs that are vacant because of the county's low unemployment rates.

MCEDC has been organizing educational tours of manufacturing plants for students and the general public since 2012, but in 2017, began focusing specifically on tours for the currently unemployed and underemployed individuals who are seeking quality jobs that pay well and offer full benefits.

Tours have been hosted by four companies so far in 2017, and another four are on the schedule.

After each tour, reports from the companies show that over half the people touring have been offered jobs. "These are people who just need a chance to show what they can do. And in Medina County, we give everyone a chance," said Jeffrey Felton, Director of Medina County Job and Family Services (JFS).

In addition to JFS, MCEDC is also partnering with Employing Medina County, Medina County Probation, Jobs for Ohio Graduates, OhioMeansJobs Medina County and others to help educate job seekers on the types of jobs available and help the unemployed connect with employers.

"Everyone knows what retail and healthcare jobs look like. But if you have never walked through a manufacturing plant, explored a construction site, or visited the back office of a service organization, it is difficult to see yourself working there," said Kathy Breitenbucher, Workforce Coordinator for MCEDC. "We are taking people into manufacturers and other businesses to help them see themselves in the different roles, and it is working."

Workforce availability in Medina County is also impacted by commuting patterns: over 50% of county residents leave the county for work. To increase the pool of available workers by bringing attention to local job opportunities, MCEDC launched www.worklocal.net in August, 2016.

Now with over 2,200 postings on the site for jobs in Medina County, MCEDC officials hope that people leaving the county today can find the job they have closer to home. "The more people we can keep in the county, the better off our companies will be in the long term," said Bethany Dentler, Executive Director of MCEDC.

Recognizing that the county also has to ensure a pipeline of future workers, MCEDC is collaborating with the school system, from elementary to higher education, to help students understand what work looks

like, what career options they have with or without college, and that the opportunities are here in Medina County.

Beyond just attracting the interest of potential workers, companies also need to ensure they have the proper skill sets for industry. To get the word out about training opportunities, MCEDC partners with the Medina County Career Center and Four Cities Compact, Tri-C, Lorain County Community College, University of Akron, Medina County Public Library, and others who are developing training programs to meet the needs of businesses.

“If training is easily accessible and companies can promote from within, they can keep their employees longer and have more consistency,” said Peggy Reeves, Adult Education Director with the Medina County Career Center.

Workforce partners also help employers understand the benefits of On the Job Training and Individual Training Account dollars to help offset the costs of training to keep workers in their companies and meet the requirements of in-demand jobs.

“Workforce is our number one challenge in this county, and we aim to give companies as much support as possible. Our entire community has come together to address the workforce challenges, and we couldn’t be as successful if we didn’t have their support,” said Breitenbucher.

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