



Search Rochester:

All

Go

Find what you need
with our New Search!

Sign up for
text alerts



Advertisement

ESSENTIALS

News

Sports

Opinion

Health

Entertainment

Living

Business

Technology

Top 100

On the Record

Stock Quotes

Columnists

Databases

Multimedia / Photos

Video

Blogs

Weather

Obituaries

Nation / World

Classifieds

Mobile Site

E-Newsletters

NEIGHBORS

Brighton

Chili

Fairport / Perinton

Gates

Greece

Henrietta

Irondequoit

Penfield

Pittsford

Rochester

Victor

Webster

AROUND TOWN

ROC Moms

ROC Men

ROCPets

Rochester Magazine

Events Calendar

Wine Country

Insider

ConXion

Her Rochester

ALSO ONLINE

Help Center

Dining / Nightlife

NIE Program

Personals

Shopping

Weddings

Crossword

Tooling, other area industries need tech-sharpened workers

Daniel Wallace
Staff writer

(October 14, 2007) — Ten years ago, Dell Hodges thought he was secure. He worked as a printing press operator for Lawyers Cooperative Publishing in Webster, which produced tax materials for the IRS.

"We used to joke around that we were set for life because there were always going to be taxes."

But when the government started digitizing its documents, the joke was on people like Hodges. Facing either relocation or a job search, he chose the latter, wanting to keep his family in Webster.

His search led him to Trident Precision Manufacturing Inc. and to a realization that manufacturing is still alive in the Rochester area. The sector employs approximately 75,000 people, or 15 percent of the regional work force.

About 5,000 of those jobs are in the tooling and machining industry at companies such as Trident Precision. The Webster company takes metal and molds it, stamps it and builds tools that are used in the creation of products in the optics, medical and telecommunications industries, among others.

As with many manufacturing industries, tooling and machining is changing, becoming more high-tech and requiring workers with skills that weren't needed in an earlier era.

"People have a perception that manufacturing is an old-school, dirty, grimy assembly-line type work that doesn't require education," said Peter Collins, director of operations at Trident Precision and president of the Rochester Tooling & Machining Association, which includes about 190 companies with an average work force of 30.

The reality, Collins said, is that he wants to see job candidates who have math and science skills, can read a blueprint, communicate well and possess a strong work ethic.

A person like Hodges was well-suited in many ways for a job at Trident Precision, which employs 160, but lacked enough technical skills.

That's where facilities such as Monroe Community College's Applied Technologies Center in Brighton come into play. MCC offers a certificate program and a degree program in tooling and machining, and Hodges, now 53, went through it before landing the job at Trident Precision.

The industry generally has had a hard time attracting people, and now that many older workers are nearing retirement the need is even greater, said Dianna Phillips, dean of technical education at MCC.

"It's almost like they (young people) have the image of a Dickensian environment with old guys hunched over a big piece of machinery in a hot setting," she said, echoing Collins.

High schools used to be the main source of candidates for the industry, but Phillips said an increased emphasis on college preparatory courses and less emphasis on vocational training have exacerbated the worker shortage. Collins agreed with her assessment, saying school districts have less flexibility now in directing students toward vocational programs offered by the Board of Cooperative Educational Services.

To put the spotlight on advanced manufacturing industries, the tooling and machining companies have started a campaign titled "I've got the best job you never heard of."

Collins pointed out that one of his young adult workers makes at least \$50,000 a year. He contrasted that with a college graduate who might enter the work force with \$50,000 of debt.

"I sympathize with their issues of filling the holes," said M&T Bank economist Gary Keith, who notes that manufacturing is healthier than many people might think.



enlarge -+

ANNETTE LEIN staff photographer
Dell Hodges of Webster got technology training at Monroe Community College that qualified him for a job as a press brake operator at Trident Precision Manufacturing.

Day in Photos

Path to a job

The tool and machining industry in the Rochester area is always looking for qualified workers. Here are tips from Monroe BOCES 1 on getting into the industry:

- Contact a training facility. In Monroe County there are two places to get training: BOCES (mainly for high school students, but it does have adult education) and Monroe Community College's Applied Technologies Center (for post-secondary and displaced workers).
- Complete at least one year of training in machining equipment and computer-related systems.
- Work with career coordinators at the training facility for placement in a two- to four-year apprenticeship paying \$8.50 to \$10.50 an hour.
- Go from an apprenticeship to journeyman's status, with pay rising to \$15 to \$25 an hour.

Related news from the Web

Latest headlines by topic:

- Computers
- Education Etc.

Powered by Topix.net

Last seven days of news

Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat | Sun

1999-Present Archive

Article tools

Print this
 email
 Reprint info
 [article](#)

Article tools sponsored by



Enter your phone number below to have local alerts sent to your phone.

() -

Continue

Modify existing alerts
4INFO | Get this tool

Advertisement

Sudoku	"When you see top-line numbers that suggest manufacturing jobs are declining, don't take that to mean every single manufacturing sector is under the same pressure," he said.
TV Listings	
Horoscopes	
RSS Feeds	
Podcasts	
Forums	
Archives	DJWALLAC@DemocratandChronicle.com

- **Last seven days of news**

Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat | Sun

- **1999-Present Archive**

■ Democrat and Chronicle Interactive

E-Newsletters



Sign up for E-Newsletters.

Samples:

Latest News

FingerLakeWine.com

Business News

RSS feeds are also available.

Podcasts



Download a pod or vodcast:

Sports Exchange

Varsity Voices

At the Movies with Jack

Subscribe now



Account

EZ Pay

Contact us

Advertisement

CUSTOMER SERVICE: [Place An Ad](#) • [Manage Your Subscription](#) • [Contact Us](#) • [Submit A Story Idea](#) • [Jobs With Us](#) • [Our Mission](#) • [Feedback](#)

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS: Circulation Customer Service: (800) 790-9565 • Classified Advertising: (585) 454-1111 • Retail Advertising: (585) 258-2552
Advertising Toll Free (NY State only): 1 (800) 767-7539 • Newsroom: (585) 258-2214 • Death Notices: (585) 546-7000

PARTNERS: Jobs: [CareerBuilder.com](#) • Cars: [Cars.com](#) • Apartments: [Apartments.com](#) • Homes: [Homescape.com](#) • Shopping: [ShopLocal.com](#) • Gannett Co., Inc. [Gannett Foundation](#) • [USA Today](#) • [USA Weekend](#)

GANNETT NEW YORK NETWORK: [Binghamton](#) • [Elmira](#) • [Ithaca](#) • [Poughkeepsie](#) • [Rochester](#) • [Westchester](#) • [WGRZ-TV, Buffalo](#)

Copyright © 2007, The Rochester Democrat and Chronicle, All rights reserved. Users of this site agree to the [Terms of service](#) and [Privacy Policy/Your California Privacy Policy](#) (Terms updated March 2007)
Mailing Address: 55 Exchange Boulevard | Rochester, New York 14614 | (585) 232-7100