

Jim Doyle
Governor

Roberta Gassman
Secretary



State of Wisconsin

Department of Workforce Development

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

201 East Washington Avenue
P.O. Box 7946
Madison, WI 53707-7946
Telephone: (608) 266-7552
Fax: (608) 266-1784
<http://www.dwd.state.wi.us/>
e-mail: dwdsec@dwd.state.wi.us

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Contact: Rose Lynch, Director of Communications, 608-266-6753

Ivan Milanovic Receives Wisconsin Apprenticeship Award *Oshkosh Electrician at State Apprenticeship Conference & Expo*

Madison – Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development Secretary Roberta Gassman today addressed the 23rd biennial Apprenticeship Conference and Expo held in Madison. She highlighted the state's apprenticeship program and reported that adult apprenticeship opportunities are increasing as a result of the economic and workforce development initiatives advanced by Governor Doyle.

"Wisconsin's adult apprenticeship program is a sure pathway to a quality workforce," Secretary Gassman said. "The program is one of the reasons our workforce remains second to none. It has been a model to other states since its inception nearly a century ago, first in the nation. Whether you're a recent high school graduate, a veteran returning from active duty, or someone searching for a more rewarding career, the adult apprenticeship program can put you on the path to jobs with good pay and benefits in the skilled trades."

In addition to economic and workforce development initiatives in the Governor's budget, Secretary Gassman stated that DWD will increase efforts this year to reach out to employers and encourage their participation in the adult apprenticeship program to further increase enrollment. "The success of this program is due in large part to the employers who recognize the value of the program and provide training and work opportunities for apprentices," Secretary Gassman said. "We applaud them for supporting the apprenticeship program and for helping to build the state's future workforce."

During an awards luncheon, several individuals and employers received honors. Three people received the Apprentice Leadership Award:

Oshkosh electrician Ivan Milanovic, a Serbian refugee who came America over eight years ago, received the state Apprentice Leadership Award today at the Apprenticeship Conference and Expo.

Milanovic worked as a truck driver, then entered the state's adult apprenticeship program. In 2001, he started working for Town & Country Electric, a division of Faith Technologies, Inc., in Appleton. Corporate Training Director Karmen Sommer said Milanovic's was motivated.

"He had a lot to overcome, including learning a new language, a new culture, and a new skill set," Sommer said. "But, for Ivan, this great feat was simple. He has a positive attitude. He's a quick learner, very motivated. Above all, Ivan's very respectful of others. Customers specifically request him. Ivan is in our Top Gun program, the top 10 percent of apprentices in our company."

According to his nomination papers, Milanovic worked for the American Embassy in Belgrade and had an opportunity to come to America. On short notice, he and his wife, Yelena, gathered their belongings and brought their month old son to America. They now have two sons and live in Oshkosh.

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Two more individuals also were honored with the Apprentice Leadership Award:

- Alaina Gomez, a single mother from Milwaukee, who excelled as an apprentice in plumbing and now works for J.M. Brennan installing and maintaining medical gas systems at All Saints Hospital in Racine.
- Dan Treichel, an electric lineman for River Falls Municipal Utilities. Treichel was the utility's first apprentice, and General Manager Carl Gaulke said they could not be more pleased with the result.

Three employers received the Apprenticeship Program Sponsor Award: H.J. Pertzborn Plumbing & Fire Protection Corporation, Madison; Manitowoc Crane Group, Manitowoc, and Appearances at Alma's, Menomonie.

South Central WI Construction Laborers JAC and Zignego Company, Inc., Daniel A. Zignego, Controller won the Affirmative Action Award.

About 400 business leaders, skilled trade representatives and technical college instructors attended the conference, "The Path to a Quality Workforce," in Middleton. During the two-day conference, approximately 300 students from high schools in Dane County will visit Expo exhibits to learn about apprenticeship opportunities and rewarding careers in the trades.

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Secretary Gassman said an increase in adult apprenticeship enrollment last year was another sign of Wisconsin's growing economy. Enrollment hit a peak of 13,000 in 2001, but dropped below 10,000 following the recession. Enrollment increased last year and is about to exceed 10,000, due mainly the state's construction boom. Construction apprentices now total 5,928, up 220 from a year ago, including 114 minorities and women. Adult apprentices typically start at \$15 to \$16 an hour, about half of what successful apprentices will later earn as journeymen.

To become an apprentice in most trades, an individual must be at least 18 years of age, have a high school diploma or equivalent, and meet minimum test scores in math, reading and comprehension.

For more information about the adult apprenticeship program, visit the department's website: <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dws/appr/default.htm>.