

**Department of Workforce Development  
Secretary's Office**  
201 East Washington Avenue  
P.O. Box 7946  
Madison, WI 53707-7946  
Telephone: (608) 266-3131  
Fax: (608) 266-1784  
Email: [dwdsec@dwd.state.wi.us](mailto:dwdsec@dwd.state.wi.us)  
Website: <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/>



---

Monday, February 12, 2007  
Contact: Rose Lynch, Director of Communications, 608-266-6753

## **Alaina Gomez Receives Wisconsin Apprenticeship Award** *Milwaukee single mother excelled as plumber, works for Racine hospital*

**Madison** – Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development Secretary Roberta Gassman today addressed the 23<sup>rd</sup> 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:

Alaina Gomez, a single mother from Milwaukee who excelled as a plumbing apprentice, received the state Apprentice Leadership Award today at the 23<sup>rd</sup> biennial Apprenticeship Conference and Expo in Middleton.

In nominating Gomez, trade union representatives described her as very determined to succeed in a physically demanding trade that few women choose. They said she was determined to make a better life for her children and succeeded as an apprentice, certified to install and maintain medical gas systems in hospitals.

"Alaina was driven to provide a good life for her children," said Scott Hamilton, training director with Plumber's Local 75 Education Fund. "Alaina not only excelled, but she assisted other students to become successful. She will work as hard as anyone else. There have never been any job site complaints about Alaina Gomez, only compliments."

Gomez was a student in plumbing at the Milwaukee Trade and Technology High School. After graduating, she took a course at the Milwaukee Area Technical College to improve her chances of being accepted into the adult apprenticeship program. Gomez now works for J.M. Brennan, Inc., and as a journeyman, installs and maintains medical gas systems that supply oxygen to patients at All Saints Hospital in Racine.

"As an apprentice, she took the initiative to become medical gas certified and became a viable resource as a crew member at one of the many hospitals in which we do work," said Jeff Herbrode, Brennan's project manager. "It has been a pleasure to be part of the learning process and to watch her develop into the professional she has become."

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

- Ivan Milanovic, a Serbian refugee, who overcame a language barrier to excel as an apprentice electrician and now works for Town & Country Electric, a division of Faith Technologies, Inc., Appleton;
- 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.

"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."

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 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 journeypersons.

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>.