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DWD Secretary Announces New Steps to Promote Apprenticeship as Proven Means to Prepare Workers with Skills Employers Need

Secretary Newson visits Green Bay Packaging to encourage Wisconsinites to consider apprenticeship

GREEN BAY – During a visit today to Green Bay Packaging, Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Reggie Newson announced a second phase of a new statewide education and outreach initiative to boost employer and job seeker participation in Wisconsin Apprenticeship, a program that has produced skilled workers to meet employers' needs for more than a century.

"Wisconsin's apprenticeship program provides customized training opportunities that result in highly skilled workers," Secretary Newson said. "I encourage individuals who are seeking a good-paying career in Wisconsin to consider apprenticeship. Through this program, apprentices develop the skills that employers need in order to be successful, which supports job creation and economic growth across the state."

Today's announcement included the unveiling of billboards in Green Bay, Madison, Milwaukee, and Wausau that will be seen by motorists an estimated 4.5 million times during the month of May. DWD is also launching a new public service announcement (PSA) to encourage young adults to consider taking part in apprenticeship. The PSA will be available at DWD's YouTube channel, www.youtube.com/wiworkforce and distributed for TV stations to consider airing.

DWD recently announced a multimedia apprenticeship outreach initiative, which includes a variety of materials designed to engage employers. Highlights include:

- A "toolkit" of updated brochures, folders and educational materials for regional representatives to provide directly to employers explaining how apprenticeship can provide them with well-trained and loyal workers, which can make their businesses more productive.
- An educational video that speaks directly to employers about the benefits of apprenticeship with a brochure titled *The Top 10 Reasons to Train Apprentices*.
- Postcards, display ads for online and print that convey the value of Apprenticeship to employers.

Green Bay Packaging Vice President of Containerboard Sales Jeff Walch joined Secretary Newson at today's announcement. Mr. Walch noted that Green Bay Packaging has benefited since the company began training electrician apprentices in 2006. Today, they are currently training 10 apprentices to be industrial electricians and maintenance mechanics.

Also joining Secretary Newson was Dr. Jeff Rafn, President of Northeast Wisconsin Technical College, which provides classroom instruction. Apprenticeship training combines on-the-job training with a journeyworker tailored to employers' specific skills needs, and classroom instruction, typically at a local technical college.

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Apprentices are enrolled for four to five years, increasing their wages as their skills develop. Apprentices graduate from the apprenticeship program with a nationally-recognized credential, providing employers with a highly-skilled, loyal workforce. Apprentices who graduate can find work in good-paying jobs. The average annual wage in manufacturing occupations is over \$51,400, more than \$10,000 above the average annual wage for all occupations in Wisconsin.

Wisconsin's apprenticeship program was the first in the nation when it was signed into law in 1911. Since that time, Wisconsin has trained thousands of apprentices in a wide variety of occupations. In 2012, Wisconsin had 9,608 apprentices training in over 200 occupations, including 4,832 working in construction, 1,689 in industrial and manufacturing trades, and 3,087 in the service industry.

Even so, Secretary Newson noted that the outreach initiative is designed to engage even more individuals to take advantage of the program and to help turn around a decline in employer participation that has been seen nationally and in Wisconsin over the past decade.

As part of Governor Walker's commitment to Wisconsin Apprenticeship, his 2013–15 budget proposal includes permanent state funding for Wisconsin's apprenticeship program.

DWD partnered with Laughlin Constable, a regional advertising agency and the primary vendor for the state Department of Tourism, to invest in the comprehensive education and outreach effort to build interest in the apprenticeship program.

For more information, visit www.WisconsinApprenticeship.org.