



## NEWS RELEASE

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### North Carolina Manufacturing Institute Graduates 100<sup>th</sup> Success Story

**Talent Development and Employer Pipeline Initiative Producing Qualified Workers Continues to Transform Lives in North Carolina**

"My life has really turned around since I started working at Carolina Beverage upon graduating from the **North Carolina Manufacturing Institute (NCMI)**. My national certification gave me the confidence to pursue a career position, and it felt really good having several companies interested in hiring me right after graduation." said Stuart "Chuck" Johnston, an October 2016 NCMI graduate.

This is a typical comment heard from the North Carolina Manufacturing Institute graduates after successfully completing screening, training, certification and finding employment through NCMI. Since the official launch-date of the NCMI initiative in April 2015, over 100 individuals have had their lives and their families' lives transformed. On average, 88% of graduates have full-time employment within 1 to 2 months of graduation, with most of them at local employers who have partnered with the Institute. The NCMI was created by partners including the Centralina Workforce Development Board, Rowan-Cabarrus Community College (RCCC), and leaders from the Chambers of Commerce and Economic Development in Rowan and Cabarrus counties. Last year, the Institute expanded into Iredell County. Mitchell Community College, Mooresville-South Iredell Chamber of Commerce, Statesville Chamber of Commerce, and both economic development agencies from Statesville and Mooresville all joined the effort.

"You can't beat this path to a better career! The NCMI gave me a great career, not just a job I'll have for one, two, or three years; but a job I can have for the rest of my life," said Reggie Lawson, a 2016 NCMI alumni who graduated from the Institute's third class.



*Figure 1 Reggie Lawson (NCMI graduate) pictured with his wife and son*

Prior to enrolling in the NCMC, Lawson had been working hard since 2009 and held four different jobs loading and unloading trucks, driving forklifts, running presses, and training other people to do the same. He never felt like he was in a career that would take him places. "They were just jobs," he said.

"I really wanted a better chance to help out my family, and that's why I looked into the NCMC and spent 8 weeks going to class every day to become a Certified Production Technician, even though I was working a full-time job," Lawson said. "I learned so much in those eight weeks, stuff

that no one had ever taught me on any of my previous jobs."

During those 8 weeks in class, students tour the NCMC partnering companies. After graduating with their Certified Production Technician national certification from the Manufacturing Skill Standards Council, students have guaranteed interviews with a minimum of 10 of the partnering companies during the NCMC Interview Fair held on the college campus.

"After several interviews, I accepted a position with Chemical Specialties in Harrisburg as a chemical operator and it's been great," Lawson said.

It is common for some graduates to receive more than one job offer after their many follow-up interviews. Then they are faced with the decision of choosing which offer they should accept.

"I talked to 12 companies at my Interview Fair and accepted the offer from Carolina Beverage. Several months later, another NCMC partner company called me saying they had the "perfect job" for me if I was still interested! I was amazed that multiple companies wanted me," said Chuck Johnston.



*Figure 2 Chuck Johnston on the manufacturing floor at new job--Carolina Beverage*

Before Johnston became a Certified Production Technician, he was working just to work and get a paycheck. He and his wife had been stressing out about money and he felt like he was stuck in dead-end jobs. He realized that it was time to get serious and begin his career job. That's when he discovered the NC Manufacturing Institute.

"Between the NCMC classes and my 5 months here at Carolina Beverage, I have a lot of training under my belt, and it has helped me move up to a lead position already." Johnston added.

As one of the NCMC employer partners' recruiters said, "CPT hires are much more confident and immediately have a basic understanding of what is going on in the plant. This makes them catch on to things much more rapidly than a new hire without this certification."

Manufacturing in the region is a field in demand for qualified, skilled talent. In fact, people are leaving other career industries to pursue manufacturing. Monique Sharpless, a 2015 NCMC alumni who graduated from NCMC's third class was hired by Agility Fuel Solutions.

Sharpless had decided she was tired of sitting at a desk all day answering phones and was feeling burned out from working in an office setting. She made up in her mind that she wanted to be part of the manufacturing process.

"With 24 years of only office experience, I could not get an interview for a production type job. So, I took the certified production technician eight-week course because it showed that I had the initiative and was serious about making this career change," Sharpless said.

She went to the discovery (information) session in June 2015, completed the scholarship application and started the class in August, graduated in October, and was hired by Agility Fuel Solutions in December where she still is to this day.

"I am a lot happier and do not regret making this move from an office job to a manufacturing production job. My life-long career goal has come true," said Sharpless.



*Figure 3 Monique Sharpless working hard at Agility Fuel Solutions in Salisbury, NC.*

Sharpless wasn't the only woman among the NCMI graduates who changed career paths. Joanna Giles from Iredell County did the same. Giles was a displaced administrative healthcare worker who experienced job loss through downsizing. She found herself in the dreadful position of being unemployed. As a result, she decided to continue her education by earning a degree in accounting. However, with no work experience in accounting, her job search was unsuccessful and she really needed a job immediately. While seeking help from Mitchell Community College's employability lab, she came across an advertisement for the NCMI and jumped on it instantly.

"Desperately needing a job, this opportunity sounded like a dream come true for me, especially when I learned that full scholarships would be provided to those students who chose to attend," said Giles.

Just one day after graduating, Giles participated in her class' NCMI interview fair where she was introduced to her future employer, Detroit Speed.

"Shortly after my interview fair, Detroit Speed had an opening in their accounting department. The HR Manager contacted me for an interview, and the rest is history," Giles said. "I absolutely love my job and could not ask for a better job placement." She added that NCMI and Mitchell Community College played an integral part in her new career.



*Figure 4 Joanna Giles displays her happiness with the NCMI in a car model at (Detroit Speed) her new place of employment.*

"I will forever be grateful for the NCMI. I truly hope that anyone who is unemployed or underemployed will explore this eight-week certified production technician training through NCMI. I highly recommend NCMI, as it has made such a positive impact on my life."

The North Carolina Manufacturing Institute is a response to employers' needs for solving talent recruitment issues to grow and remain competitive. This initiative builds a clear and

achievable pathway for people to acquire those skills to access good jobs in local communities.

Manufacturing firms benefit from partnering with the North Carolina Manufacturing Institute through access to a pipeline of screened, trained, certified production technicians who can help them achieve their business goals.

The North Carolina Manufacturing Institute is specifically designed to link and leverage the existing assets of Rowan, Cabarrus, and Iredell counties to solve a growing gap between regional job seekers and available positions. Its innovative funding and operational structure allows the Institute to deliver results in response to a rapidly-growing need for manufacturing employees with certified skills and verified work readiness.

***Strategic Vision:***

To build a world class talent pool to support the retention and growth of regional manufacturers

***Key Focus Areas:***

- Deliver training that closes the skill gap between job seekers and available jobs
- Provide services and systems to more effectively match job seekers and available jobs in the manufacturing sector
- Improve the image of manufacturing employment among job seekers, students, parents, and school personnel

For more information regarding the North Carolina Manufacturing Institute visit, [www.ncmanufacturinginstitute.com](http://www.ncmanufacturinginstitute.com). Also, like and share the North Carolina Manufacturing Institute Facebook Page for the latest updates and news.