

Monday, January 7, 2019

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Mark Gunderman, Communications Specialist
Chippewa Valley Technical College
Desk: 715-831-7288
Cell: 715-210-4714
mgunderman1@cvtc.edu

Expanded Program Draws Future Industrial Mechanics *Trio of recent Menomonie grads among those taking advantage*

Eau Claire, WI – Tony Hess of Lake Hallie started looking for something better when he realized he was spinning his wheels at age 23.

“I was job hopping for a while and was at a mediocre job,” he said. “I wanted to go back to school and look for an apprenticeship or something.”

Ray Hardy, 23, of Jim Falls, a 2013 Cadott High School graduate, was in a similar situation. “I had two jobs, farming for a neighbor and working production at the AMPI plant in Jim Falls.”

Both workers found a pathway toward employment improvement through the Industrial Mechanical Technician program at Chippewa Valley Technical College. But there is more to the story of their success than their decisions to enroll in some classes.

It started with some manufacturers talking to people at CVTC about how desperately they need people who know how to maintain, diagnose and repair automated equipment.

“All employers are seeking industrial mechanics for their maintenance operations,” said program director Tim Tewart. “Manufacturers like Golden Plump, Nestle, Bush Beans and 3M have continued to hire CVTC graduates and the list of companies looking for their next industrial maintenance technicians continues.”

In 2016, CVTC announced it would be taking the lead in a \$5 million Department of Labor TechHire grant to be shared with other technical colleges to prepare people for high-growth jobs. CVTC’s \$1.7 million local share is being spent over four years to enhance the Industrial Mechanic program under an IMPACT grant that is part of the TechHire grant program.

Working with Workforce Resource, CVTC targeted the 17-29 age group, and unskilled, unemployed or under-employed workers.

“By expanding the Industrial Mechanic program, CVTC advances two parts of its mission – to meet the workforce needs of the region and to improve the lives of students,” said CVTC Dean of Skilled Trades

and Engineering Jeff Sullivan. “Many good-paying jobs are available in the field and an expanded program increases opportunities while at the same time filling a need in business and industry.”

“With the complexity and diversity of equipment in our manufacturing plant, we look for skilled technicians that can troubleshoot, maintain and execute improvements,” said Glenn Giesregen, plant engineering manager at 3M in Menomonie. “Today’s manufacturing environment is high-tech, and demands highly trained technicians such as those coming from the Industrial Mechanic program at CVTC.”

When Hess entered the Industrial Mechanic program, he didn’t hesitate to start looking for a job with a company that would let him get started well before his scheduled graduation in May 2020.

“A lot of companies would hire me after I finished, but Allied Dies in Chippewa Falls was willing to hire me right away and financially help with my schooling too,” Hess said.

Hess started out polishing the dies. “Every now and then they have a mechanic come in and I’ll shadow him,” he said. “They don’t have an industrial mechanic around, but they were looking to hire one so they didn’t have to outsource.”

Hardy wanted to move into a mechanic’s position at AMPI, but needed either experience or training. “But the maintenance manager was agreeable to me working part time while going to school. I mainly shadow people in maintenance for now.”

For Hardy, it’s a much-needed improvement. “I used to stack 50-pound bags eight hours straight,” he said. “Maintenance is a lot more interesting.” Not only that, but it could mean a raise of around \$5 an hour once he finishes.

With over 90 programs and both online and on-campus classes, Chippewa Valley Technical College delivers superior, progressive technical education which improves the lives of students, meets the workforce needs of the region, and strengthens the community. CVTC programs are designed with input of business and industry to prepare graduates for today’s jobs, with 94 percent employed within six months of graduation and associate degree graduates earning an average annual salary of \$43,000.

Cutlines:

Hess Photo

Tony Hess of Lake Hallie works on a timer relay circuit in the Industrial Mechanic lab at CVTC in December 2018. Hess also work at Allied Dies in Chippewa Falls, which is preparing him to be the in-house mechanic when he finishes school.

Hardy Photo

Ray Hardy of Jim Falls sets up a pneumatic simulator in the Industrial Mechanic lab at CVTC in December 2018. Hardy works at the AMPI plant in Jim Falls as he is finishes his training to become a full-time mechanic at the plant.

#

CVTC does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in employment, admissions, programs, or activities. General inquiries regarding the College's non-discrimination policies may be directed to:

Director of Human Resources
Chippewa Valley Technical College
620 W. Clairemont Ave.
Eau Claire, WI 54701
715-852-1377
WI Relay: 711