



NEWS RELEASE

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Quincy, Ill Ahead of the Game with New Workforce Development Center

John Wood Community College's 30,000 square-foot workforce development center is quickly becoming the premier training facility in the west central Illinois region. The facility which is situated on 14 acres and was purchased in 2008 as part of the College's master site and facilities plan, is the result of a collaborative project fueled by JWCC, local business, industry and community leaders.

At a time when many communities are just beginning to look at workforce development in response to the national economic climate, Quincy is turning out workers with skills that fit local business and industry's specific needs. This is thanks in part to the timing of a 2007 survey funded by the Workforce Investment Board of Western Illinois (WIB) about area workforce needs.

"Thanks to WIB and John Wood Community College, we feel like we're ahead of the game," Jim Mentesti, president of the Great River Economic Development Foundation, said. "For years members of our business and educational communities have been sitting around the table discussing how we can work together to develop a plan that makes sense. We didn't know just how important and timely workforce development would become."

"The establishment of a business and industry workforce development center in this facility will enable us to better meet the training needs of area businesses and industry," explained then new JWCC President Thomas Klinzar in a press release dated August 21, 2008. "The college has been working closely with the advisory councils for several of our career and technical programs, as well as with key leaders in these industries, planning for this for some time, and we now have the opportunity to move forward with this plan."

Several leading companies in the area have invested in the center through monetary and equipment donations. JWCC Workforce Development Center partners include: Knapheide Manufacturing, Titan Wheel International, Gardner Denver, Michelmann Steel, Quincy Compressor, Quincy Metal Fabricators, Central Welding Supply, Great River Economic Development Foundation, Illinois Workforce Investment Board and several area trucking companies.

Features of the building include a three-acre commercial vehicle maneuvering range, electrical technology lab, instrumentation lab (program control and robotics), welding stations, computer numerical control manufacturing stations, smart classrooms, truck driver training simulation classroom and administrative and faculty offices.

“Everything John Wood Community College does is intended to better serve our community and students,” JWCC President Dr. Tom Klincar said. “This is the community’s resource for workforce training. This facility is the result of listening to the needs of local industry and its dedicated workforce and collaboratively working to make it a reality. We are grateful to the many visionary businesses and local leaders who invested in the project and pledge to continue to respond to the needs of our community in the future.”

Programs offered in the facility continue to take shape as workforce needs evolve. Currently the JWCC Workforce Development Center is home to the nationally recognized truck driver training, electrical technology, welding technology and emergency services (fire science, law enforcement and paramedicine) programs. New programs slated to begin in the future will include construction technology and manufacturing technology. JWCC also offers customized and contract training for local business and industry. Such training can range from lean manufacturing principles to soft skills development provided in one-time seminars or extended coursework.

Many Quincy-area manufacturers have partnered with the College to tailor training for employees. In 2009, Knapheide Manufacturing Company provided 12 welding stations for the facility and advised JWCC in the creation of its manufacturing curriculum and lab. Knapheide Manufacturing is a producer of steel service truck bodies and platform/stake style bodies that began in Quincy over 160 years ago. Manchester Tank also donated a significant amount of steel for the program.

“It is crucial for our region to have a resource for workforce training so business and industry can develop the skills of our employees,” Knapheide owner and CEO Harold W. Knapheide III noted. “Companies like ours are continually searching for efficiencies and innovations, and John Wood is filling a need for us as we work to adapt to the changing economy.”

The college envisions the Workforce Development Center as a vital resource to area business and industry. Jim Mentesti feels that JWCC’s collaborative efforts should help current manufacturers with their needs today and possibly expand the sector in the future.

“The current local economy, although diverse, needs to maintain and grow the manufacturing sector,” he said. “In our diverse employee base, more than 16 percent of the jobs are in manufacturing. The U.S. is at 10 percent and State of Illinois is 11 percent. John Wood Community College’s new center will allow us to not only retain jobs but expand manufacturing jobs as well.”

The JWCC Workforce Development Center opened in fall 2009 and is located at 4220 Koch’s Lane in one of Quincy’s several industrial areas.

Located on the Mississippi River, Quincy, Illinois is the largest city within a 100-mile radius and serves as a regional hub for 600,000 people in Western Illinois, Northeast Missouri and Southeast Iowa. For more information about Quincy and Adams County, contact the Great River Economic Development Foundation at 217.223.4313 or visit www.gredf.org.

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