



Need ideas for your  
kid's lunch box? C1



This pie is downright  
delicious. C2

**dealsaver** 50 percent off entry fees for the 5K Zombie Run on Sept. 26.  
SIGN UP TODAY AT DEALSAVER.COM/NEWS/PAID. SEE AD ON PAGE A9

YOUR VOICE. YOUR CHOICE. SINCE 1858. | TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2015 | 51

# Industry leaders push manufacturing careers

BY ELIZABETH DONALD  
News-Democrat

Business leaders and educators are hoping to attract more young people into skilled trades, with an initiative aimed at high school students to fill thousands of expected jobs in manufacturing. The campaign aims to educate high school students and their parents, guidance counselors, principals and others to encourage students with an aptitude for mechanics and engineering to consider going into the manufacturing trades.

Industry leaders anticipate that the metro-east will have between 1,500 and 3,000 job openings in the

manufacturing industry in Madison and St. Clair counties within the next five years, due to expected retirements and growth in manufacturing in the region.

Don Vichitvongsa, chairman of the Leadership Council manufacturing steering committee and general manager of SunCoke Energy, said the top 50 manufacturing companies in southwestern Illinois account for 16,000 jobs and smaller manufacturers account for many more.

"Thousands retiring in the coming years will create a wave of openings that will be hard to fill unless more people open their minds to

the prospect of a future career in manufacturing or the many trades that support our manufacturing," Vichitvongsa said during a news conference Monday in Alton.

David Stoecklin, executive director of the Madison-Bond Workforce Development Board, said there are a lot of misconceptions about the nature of manufacturing work.

"This campaign aims to dispel the myth of manufacturing as dirty work, mediocre pay and job insecurity, and instead spotlight the reality, which is opportunities for a fast-paced, high-paying career using the latest in state-of-the-art tech-

nology."

Stoecklin said manufacturing jobs such as machinists can earn \$80,000 a year, while other trades average \$33 an hour plus \$22 an hour in benefits.

Madison County Chairman Alan Dunstan said it is important to recognize that not every student will attend a four-year college and those that do sometimes end up with massive student debt. Students pursuing careers in manufacturing trades can be earning a paycheck from age 18, he said.

Madison County Regional Superintendent Bob Daiber said that those who don't make it through college often end up going to trade schools or community colleges anyway.

"We are looking at high school diplomas as being the first step," Daiber said. "They need to be leaving high school with some skills and technical knowledge; we live in a technical socie-



David Stoecklin  
announces the new  
workforce campaign at  
bnd.com.

ty... As students mature in their education process, there's a juncture where a kid starts saying, 'What do I want to do with the rest of my life?' That's why this program is so important."

The campaign announced Monday at Cope Plastics in Alton will include a website, information hotline, billboards, funded field trips to allow students to tour manufacturing plants and other efforts. It is coordinated by the Madison-Bond and Mid-America workforce investment boards, the manufacturing steering committee of the Leadership Council of Southwestern Illinois, and many local manufacturers such as Phillips66, SunCoke Energy, U.S. Steel, Olin

Corp., Dynergy, Affton Chemical, the ROHO Group, Metro-East Industries and others.

Leadership groups supporting the initiative include Southwestern Illinois College and Lewis & Clark Community College, as well as the Southwestern Illinois Building and Construction Trades Council and the regional superintendents of Madison and St. Clair counties.

Two upcoming events include an open house for SWIC's manufacturing training program on Oct. 2 at the Granite City campus, and a Metro Career Expo at the Belleville fairgrounds Nov. 2-5.

"We are hopeful that through events like these, our target audience will seize the opportunity to seize their own destiny," Vichitvongsa said.

Contact reporter Elizabeth Donald at edonald@bnd.com or 618-239-2507.