

Manufacturing Day events offer business connections workforce development

Written by By Kate Millard Finance New Mexico
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The Manufacturing Institute projects that U.S. manufacturers will need to fill 4.6 million jobs by 2028, but misperceptions about modern manufacturing could cause more than half of those positions to remain vacant. The nonprofit New Mexico Manufacturing Extension Partnership aims to address misperceptions among students while they are preparing themselves for college and careers by showing them opportunities in manufacturing.

That's where Manufacturing Day comes in. Celebrated the entire month of October, the initiative highlights the changes that have occurred in the manufacturing industry and introduces students to careers in clean tech and modern manufacturing.

"As Manufacturing 4.0 continues to revolutionize factory floors in New Mexico and across the country, jobs are becoming more high-tech and commanding higher pay," Jennifer Sinsabaugh, executive director of New Mexico MEP said. "These jobs rely on critical thinking, creativity, and innovative approaches – skills that can only be provided by humans."

Sinsabaugh said today's manufacturing is about state-of-the-art facilities and advanced technologies, but surveys indicate that many people still envision dark and dreary factories that employ non-skilled labor to perform repetitive tasks. According to one study, only 35 percent of parents say they would encourage their children to pursue careers in manufacturing.

FACILITIES OPEN THEIR DOORS

Manufacturing Day aims to enhance public knowledge by giving visitors a look behind closed doors. Companies host facility tours that demonstrate the many production stages that turn raw materials into products that are shipped around the world.

More than 35 New Mexico manufacturers and support organizations – from Farmington to Las Cruces – are hosting tours. Most are open to the public.

In Albuquerque, visitors at Continental Machining will see high-tech equipment produce parts used by New Mexico's national laboratories. Others will see UV-blocking glass turned into precision windows at Glass--Rite, and cacao become elixirs and confections at Chocolate Cartel.

In Rio Rancho, Mezel Mods will demonstrate how 3D printers produce action figures and modifications for pinball machines, and Insight Lighting will take visitors on a journey from CAD-produced designs to architectural lighting that illuminates stadiums, airports and other large--scale venues.

In Santa Fe, visitors will see cacao turned into truffles at Art of Chocolate Cacao Santa Fe, which calls itself the only "bean-to-bar" chocolate producer in the state. Animal lovers can watch local proteins and organic vegetables become healthy dog and cat food at Marty's Meals.

Farther north, Black Mesa Winery in Velarde hosts a wine- and cider--making tour, followed by a product tasting available to visitors 21 years of age or older. Private Label Select in Taos will demonstrate how natural ingredients become lip care products, sunscreens, and products for mothers and babies. Old Wood in Las Vegas will discuss sustainable wood harvesting practices that result in flooring and firewood.

Heading south, engineering is the focus. Valencia Flour Mill in Jarales near Belen will

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demonstrate unique engineering that allows one motor to operate multiple machines that transform grain into baking mixes. Drought Adaptation Industries of Alamogordo will discuss proprietary engineering that allows anyone to grow produce using 98 percent less water than they might otherwise. Alaska Structures will take visitors on the production line that goes from structural engineering and design to framing and fabrics that make tents and temporary structures used by the military. Masa becomes tortillas and corn chips at La Primera Tortilla Factory in Sunland Park.

For those considering production of their own designs and ideas, FUSE Makerspace, Cruces Creatives, and the Workforce Center at Dona Ana Community College will introduce machines and equipment available for the use of their members.

Private tours for students will take place at more than a dozen manufacturing companies in Roswell, Taos, Socorro, Albuquerque and Las Cruces.

Events are organized by New Mexico Manufacturing Extension Partnership, a nonprofit organization that offers manufacturers training and expertise in efficient production and administrative practices that help them maximize their competitive edge and increase profits.

For more information about public tours, visit New Mexico MEP at newmexicomep.org/mfgday/. To see what's happening nationally, go to mfgday.com/.

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