

ACC hosting 'boot camp' for manufacturing

June 24, 2016

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ALPENA - Alpena Community College is hosting a "boot camp" for manufacturing workers this week. The event, at no-cost to participants, is intended to help under and unemployed individuals in the region adapt to the ever-changing jobs market.

The five day program allows participants to immerse themselves in advanced manufacturing, tour local plants, listen to guest speakers, help craft resumes. They also are given interview opportunities with local companies at the event's conclusion.

This opportunity is through a Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training grant through the Department of Labor. This was authorized in 2009 by the federal government's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and then given a two-billion dollar boost through the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010.

ACC secretary Kerrie Kamyszek said ACC received a \$2.5 million grant through the federal government for this program. Since starting in August it has had 260 participants go through the program, getting closer to its goal of 300.

The grant - the second granted to ACC - looks to focus on four areas including aerospace, cyber security, green energy and smart grid technology, and advanced manufacturing. This week's program focused on the latter of these bringing in eight participants.

In the proposal ACC submitted, issues such as the region's high unemployment, low educational attainment, and reliance on mining and construction jobs were cited as reasons for the grant. The proposal also stated the future of the region depended on increasing educational and skills attainment.

Shayne Dykes, who is on medical leave with his current employer, said the opportunity has provided him with a new look on the region's job market.

"I've learned quite a bit," he said. "A whole different learning experience, some of the things I've done before, but seeing the whole process was really beneficial to me. I now have more of an understanding of how things are done."

He was not the only one who shared that outlook. Robert Hundley, another participant in the boot camp, said it was exciting to learn what local companies in the area did and what they were looking for in their employees.

Hundley described how he had learned new trades during the week and he was optimistic about participating.

"A lot of these opportunities are not jobs, they are careers and that is what I am looking for," he said.

Five companies were going to be conducting interviews today, the last day of the program. Sarah Burt, learning technology technician at ACC, said while on a tour of the Besser Company, they ran into a former participant of the program who found employment there.

Burt said the grant requires ACC to do a six month and a year follow-up with participants. While the follow-ups had not been completed, she was thus far very pleased with the initial responses of participants.