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**"At Risk" Youth Finding Jobs Thanks to MassMEP and Regional Employment Board
Training Program
*Student from Inaugural Class Turns Internship into Job***

Worcester, MA – Twenty-one year old Tayvonne Barnes spent his days walking the inner-city streets of Worcester, out of work and out of money. He never thought he'd get a good job, let alone find one with a real career path. But thanks to a training program from the Massachusetts Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MassMEP) and the Regional Employment Board, he's getting a chance at a career in manufacturing at Stonebridge Precision Machining and Certified Welding, not far from the streets he used to wander.

"I thought about being a carpenter, but that never worked out. If it wasn't for my internship here, I'd still be walking the streets, looking for work," said Barnes.

As part of the youth training program under the WIA (Workforce Investment Act), the Manufacturing Advancement Center and Massachusetts Manufacturing Extension Partnership provide education and opportunities within the manufacturing industry. Most of the students had never been exposed to the technical operations of these manufacturing companies or taught how to look for a job at all.

"He came into the company with raw, basic skills, and knew nothing of machinery," says Kerstin Forrester, President and CEO of Stonebridge, Inc., a precision machining and certified welding company. "But now he's learning at a very good pace, and is training as a machine operator."

For the past 18 months, the staff at the Manufacturing Advancement Center, which has partnered with the MassMEP, have worked with several agencies in Central Massachusetts, Y.O.U. Inc. (Youth Opportunities Upheld), Worcester Community Action Council and Henckels and McCoy, to train and educate at-risk youths about careers in manufacturing.

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The training process starts with tours of local manufacturing facilities, so the students can see a plant in action. This is followed by a Lean 101 session demonstrating how manufacturing companies use simple methods in order to become more efficient and effective. Interviews are also conducted for each student, so they can learn how to prepare for employment.

“We’re not seeing a lot of young people who are entering the manufacturing industry,” said Jack Healy, Director of Operations at the MassMEP. “We want these kids to be aware that there are quality jobs available to them, that we will help train them and that they can make careers out of these opportunities.”

“We also want these young men and women to take pride in their work, show how they can change and grow, and how their input can make the company more profitable,” adds Bruce Dahlquist of the Central Massachusetts Regional Employment Board. “We want to show them the importance of believing in their ideas.”

Tayvonne has been employed at Stonebridge since December and Forrester says he’s learning quickly, while still getting used to the pace of working in manufacturing.

“I expected this because young people in his situation haven’t ever been exposed to a workplace environment,” said Forrester. “It’s a learning experience for both of us but it’s working out well.”

The MassMEP is an affiliate of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) under the U.S. Department of Commerce. The national MEP system is a network of manufacturing extension centers that provide business and technical assistance to smaller manufacturers in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Through MEP, manufacturers have access to more than 2,000 manufacturing and business “coaches” whose job is to help firms make changes that lead to greater productivity, increased profits and enhanced global competitiveness. For more information, please visit www.massmep.org, or phone 1-800-MEP-4MFG.

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