

Manufacturing Opens Up a Whole New World

After graduating from high school in May of 2015, Bay Path Regional Technical Vocational student Nicholas Reid was selected to participate in a manufacturing skills training program sponsored by The Chamber of Central Mass South and several area manufacturers. The grant was administered by the Chamber's Executive Director, Alix McNitt, and funded through a Regional Economic Development Organization grant. MassMEP provided the concentrated 80-hour training for the class to help them develop skills in shop math, blue print reading, metrology and quality inspection, work readiness, safety/OSHA, CNC Mill and CNC Lathe, introduction to programming and Lean manufacturing. At the end of the training a job fair was held for local manufacturers that allowed them to pre-interview the new graduates and consider them for potential entry-level positions in their companies.



Reid arrived for the job fair professionally dressed and ready to discuss his resume with the interviewers. He was nervous, like his classmates, but very excited at the possibility of potential job opportunities. For Nick this situation could have been a bit more daunting because he has both Asperger Syndrome and high functioning autism. This didn't hinder him from providing the company representatives with a pleasant greeting and well thought out answers to their questions.

As the job fair progressed the graduates grew more comfortable and Reid felt that he had made some good inroads with a few of the companies, especially United Lens. His work ethic and attention to detail was apparent to those who interviewed him. Jim Waddick, Vice President of United Lens, made note to keep Nicholas' information aside when he returned to work.

A few weeks later, Waddick invited Nick and his mother to come to United Lens for a tour. Nick says they were both pleasantly surprised having had some misconceptions about what a manufacturing environment would be like. Now they felt more comfortable should an opportunity arise.

On October 30, 2015, Jim Waddick sent the following e-mail to MassMEP: *"I am extremely pleased to share some good news: Nicholas Reid will start work at United Lens on Monday, November 2, in our Service Center."* According to Reid, Waddick was there to greet him on his first day. Jim retired from the company not long after. By December, Nicholas had also earned his driver's license and became responsible for his own transportation.

Several months have passed. Nicholas is a lens beveller in the Service Center where they make lens blanks for the optical industry. Adam Perry is his Manager. Perry says that Nick has been a great employee, extremely punctual with perfect attendance. Currently he operates 2-3 machines at once putting parts in fixtures, beveling one edge of lenses, releasing the vacuum and flipping the part and beveling the other side. He is also responsible for maintaining and measuring bevel size, which is a quality inspection role. *"Nick has picked up on the work well,"* says Perry. *"He continues to improve and*

increase his speed while maintaining quality. Everyone in the department enjoys working with him. They help each other out and he fits in well.” According to Reid he has gotten pretty comfortable using the beveling machines and recently learned to use a computer to start the machine cycle because of some button malfunction. “When things were slow a few months ago,” shared Perry, “I was able to show Nick how to rebuild pulleys on our wire saw machines. This is a maintenance process that is time consuming and requires disassembling machine parts, replacing bearings and then reassembly. Nick had no problem taking care of this for us and has been able to learn and perform his job no differently than any other person working at United Lens! We are happy to have him as part of the team!” adds Perry.

Nick sounds very confident and by his own description is very clear on all that his job entails. *“Honestly,” says Reid, “the (MassMEP) summer program was worth my time. I was inspired by what we learned and saw. Some of the manufacturing videos like the one the instructor showed us about the company that makes BMX helmets really got me interested! I enjoyed the training and the classes. I also enjoyed playing the supervisor during the Lean training and trying to keep the “workers” on track during all their shenanigans! Helping me prepare for the Job Fair was also very valuable,” he adds. “Now I have this great work opportunity at a wonderful business. I would like to work at United Lens for many years!”*

Nicholas mentioned that United Lens will celebrate their 100th anniversary this year and looks forward to being part of the festivities. *“I enjoy the work and being on the floor with my coworkers,” he says. “They are good company!”*