



May 27, 2026

Youth Outreach



Final Focus Group Wraps Up Committee Conversations

LMMC's Youth-Informed Outreach Committee recently completed the third and final session in its student manufacturing career focus group series with a visit to Wilmington Area High School, where students shared candid perspectives about careers, manufacturing and their plans after graduation.

The focus groups, conducted this spring at Wilmington, Farrell and Shenango high schools by Houck Agency, are part of the committee's effort to better understand how young people view manufacturing careers and what influences their career decisions.

The feedback gathered from students across all three schools will help shape future messaging and outreach initiatives designed to strengthen the region's manufacturing talent pool.

At Wilmington, students described manufacturing with familiar terms like steel, assembly lines, machines and industrial labor.

Yet unlike some previous sessions, many students also expressed interest in remaining local after graduation, and trade schools generated strong interest among the group.

The discussion reinforced one of the central challenges the committee hoped to explore: awareness.

While students generally viewed manufacturing as stable, hands-on work that can provide a good living, many were unfamiliar with the wide range of careers available throughout the industry.

Students also spoke openly about what matters most to them in a future career, including salary, flexibility, work-life balance and job satisfaction.

Social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook emerged as some of the primary ways students consume information and discover new interests, as well as a simple Google search.

The session also highlighted the value of direct exposure to local manufacturers.

Brendan Hathaway, principal at Wilmington Area High School, shared examples of students participating in internships opportunities with area companies, including ELLWOOD facilities, where several students have already been offered full-time positions after graduation.

With all three focus groups now complete, the committee will begin analyzing the collective findings to identify common themes, misconceptions and opportunities to better connect the next generation with rewarding manufacturing careers available close to home.

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Membership

Six Generations, One New Member

LMMC welcomes Robinson Fans as its newest addition to the list of manufacturer members, adding more than 130 years of industrial expertise to LMMC's growing network of regional employers.

Based in Zelienople, Robinson Fans is a sixth-generation family-owned manufacturer specializing in industrial fans and air-moving equipment for a wide range of industries.



The company designs and manufactures industrial fans and blowers serving industries including power generation, steel, cement, air pollution, mining and oil and gas, just to name a few, and is known for its technical expertise, precision manufacturing and long-standing customer relationships.

From machining and welding to vibration analysis, the manufacturer provides a wide range of products and services including custom industrial fans, fabrication, repairs and maintenance support.

Robinson Fans joins a growing group of manufacturers working together through LMMC to address shared workforce challenges, promote manufacturing careers and support the long-term strength of the manufacturing industry throughout the region.



Photo Courtesy Manufacturers Resource Center

Reynolds and Lakeview Participate in State Finals

Two teams from the West Central region advanced to the 8th Annual "Best of PA" statewide awards for What's So Cool About Manufacturing (WSCM) on May 13 in Harrisburg, representing the region at the Whitaker Center.

What's So Cool About Manufacturing is a statewide competition in which middle school students partner with local manufacturers to research and produce short videos showcasing modern manufacturing careers.

Reynolds Jr./Sr. High School partnered with Jamestown Coating Technologies and Lakeview Middle School partnered with Hall Manufacturing Technology to earn their spots at the state competition. Both manufacturers are LMMC members who participated in the regional competition this spring alongside ten other local companies.

At the regional level, Reynolds took home the Outstanding Overall Program award and Lakeview earned both Outstanding Educational Value and Outstanding Overall Program.

While neither West Central team placed at the state competition, making it to Harrisburg is still a significant achievement.

Teams from across Pennsylvania spent months researching their partner company and producing a short video documenting what they found.

Since its launch, the program has generated more than 7 million public votes and engaged students across more than 60% of Pennsylvania school districts.

In West Central, 12 districts participated this year, representing more than 50% of schools in the region, and the program will return next year.

For LMMC member companies, participating in WSCM is more than a community gesture.

'It's not the dirty, antiquated, dangerous environment that you may have thought. It's clean environments with robotics and automation, with a lot of opportunities for careers," said Berner International Plant Manager Joe Miller, who was the keynote speaker at the West Central Regional Awards Ceremony in April.

Congratulations to both teams and their manufacturer partners for representing the West Central region on a statewide stage.



Spread the Word About the Summer AMP Program

LMMC is partnering with Pennsylvania College of Technology to offer the Advanced Manufacturing Pre-Apprenticeship program this summer, and we need your help spreading the word.

If you know a recent high school graduate, a rising senior or a young adult without clear plans after graduation, this could be exactly the opportunity they have been looking for.

AMP is completely free and designed to give young adults a real start in the manufacturing industry.

Before the summer cohort begins, the current spring in-school

cohort is wrapping up their program and will celebrate at a graduation ceremony on June 10.

Students who enroll will gain hands-on manufacturing skills, earn up to \$1,000 during training and secure on-site interviews with regional LMMC member manufacturers.

This is not just job shadowing, but a direct pathway to meaningful, well-paying careers with real advancement potential.

The program kicks off July 6 and runs Monday through Thursday from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. It will be held at two convenient locations: Mercer County Career Center and BC3@Lawrence.

This program is a great fit for young people who are interested in entry-level manufacturing jobs, have reliable transportation and are ready to commit to full attendance.

As manufacturers, educators and community members, you are in a unique position to connect young people with this opportunity. Share this with a student, a neighbor or a family member who could benefit.

Click [here](#) to access the application, and for questions or more information, reach out to Julie Michael Smith: julie@lawrencemercermfg.com.
