



September 30, 2025

Membership

LMMC Semi-Annual Membership and Community Meeting

Hear updates on LMMC's workforce and outreach initiatives shaping manufacturing regionally and share your ideas.



TUESDAY, OCTOBER 7



8:00 - 10:00 AM



MERCER COUNTY CAREER CENTER

7



Lawrence Mercer
MANUFACTURERS COALITION

October 7, 2025
LMMC Semi Annual Membership
& Community Meeting

14

Attend LMMC's Semi-Annual Meeting

LMMC will bring together members, partners and community stakeholders for its Semi-Annual Membership & Community Meeting on Tuesday, October 7 at the Mercer County Career Center.

Doors will open at 7:30 a.m. for coffee and networking, followed by the program from 8:00 to 10:00 a.m. This no-cost event will feature updates on coalition progress and showcase priority initiatives, including Manufacturing Readiness, a pre-apprenticeship program that builds entry-level skills for jobseekers, and Talent Factory, which connects parents, teachers and other career influencers with the realities and opportunities of modern manufacturing.

The agenda also includes breakout discussions where participants can share input on pressing workforce priorities. Topics will focus on future training needs such as robotics, AI and upskilling, along with outreach strategies for connecting more effectively with today's job seekers and career influencers.

Members and community partners are encouraged to attend and help shape the coalition's ongoing efforts to strengthen the region's manufacturing workforce.

Click [here](#) to RSVP and secure your spot.

Subscribe to our Newsletter

If you were forwarded this email and would like to receive LMMC's newsletter directly, please send your name, company affiliation and email address to jim@houckpr.com.



Pictured Above: Dave Douglass, Hall Industries, speaking at 2024 Manufacturing Day event

Manufacturing Month 2025 Preview

October is Manufacturing Month, a nationwide celebration of the industry and the people who power it. In Lawrence and Mercer counties, local schools will welcome manufacturers to highlight rewarding career paths and showcase the role manufacturing plays in the region's economy.

During Manufacturing Week, September 29 through October 3, students in Lawrence County will hear from LMMC member companies, including Flowline, Berner Air Curtains, ELLWOOD, Hall Industries and FirmaPak at schools such as Mohawk, Union, Wilmington, Neshannock, Ellwood, Shenango, New Castle, Riverside, Laurel and the Lawrence County Career and Technical Center. Mercer County schools will also host career awareness events featuring area employers.

New this year, Mercer County is introducing the first-ever Manufacturing Week Contest, launched by PNDC's Homegrown Initiative in partnership with Mercer County Career Center (MCCC) and ELLWOOD.

Two MCCC student teams will compete head-to-head, developing presentations based on a case study created by ELLWOOD and MCCC. After touring ELLWOOD Crankshaft on October 6, students will present their final pitches October 16, with champions earning exclusive ELLWOOD/Homegrown merchandise and gift cards.

Youth Outreach

Student Video Contest Expands into Lawrence County

The West Central “What’s So Cool About Manufacturing” student video contest will expand into Lawrence County beginning with the 2026 competition, strengthening ties between classrooms and local manufacturers.

Designed to spark interest in modern manufacturing, the contest pairs middle school teams with employers and equips students with cameras, training and mentoring to produce short features. Videos go online for judging and a Viewers Choice vote that draws thousands.



Two Lawrence County schools are already in. Wilmington and New Castle have confirmed teams for 2026. In Mercer County, Grove City, Farrell, Reynolds, Hermitage, West Middlesex and Lakeview have also committed to participate.

“Bringing Lawrence County schools into the program expands the impact for both students and manufacturers,” said Julie Michael Smith, LMMC coalition manager. “It’s another step toward showing young people the opportunities that exist right here in our region.”

Mercer County schools have a strong track record in the contest. In 2025, LMMC members Hall Manufacturing Technologies, Berner International, Wheatland Steel Processing, T. Bruce Sales and G.W. Becker partnered with schools to showcase modern manufacturing careers.

Manufacturers or schools interested in 2026 should contact Julie Michael Smith at julie@lawrencemercermfg.com.



Photo Courtesy of ELLWOOD

Shared Goals Drive Navy Talent Pipeline and BuildSubmarines.com

The U.S. Navy's submarine industrial base depends on a steady pipeline of welders, machinists, engineers and technicians. Two initiatives are focused on that mission in different but complementary ways.

The Navy Talent Pipeline is preparing the workforce through training and career pathways, while BuildSubmarines.com is raising public awareness of the opportunities in the field.

This summer, BuildSubmarines.com partnered with RFK Racing at Pocono Raceway, where ELLWOOD's logo appeared on Brad Keselowski's No. 6 car.

A founding member of LMMC, ELLWOOD's inclusion highlighted the role of Western Pennsylvania manufacturers in building critical components for the Navy's submarine fleet.

While the Navy Talent Pipeline was not directly part of the event, both it and BuildSubmarines.com are working toward the same goal: ensuring the future workforce is ready to meet national defense needs.

For LMMC, that alignment reinforces the importance of local workforce development efforts. Manufacturing careers not only provide strong opportunities close to home, they also connect our region to projects of global significance.



Photo Courtesy of ELLWOOD

Regional Leaders Announce Career Transitions

Benjamin Bush, who has led Forward Lawrence as CEO since May of 2023, is moving on from his role to become Vice President of Public Affairs at the Allegheny Conference on Community Development.

Forward Lawrence is a member of LMMC and has been an important partner in efforts to align community priorities. In his new position, Bush will expand his work to a regional scale, connecting policy, advocacy and growth strategies for Western Pennsylvania.

Penn-Northwest Development Corporation (PNDC), also an LMMC member, has announced leadership changes of its own. Executive Director Rod Wilt has decided to step back from his role. Associate Executive Director Jake Rickert will take on greater leadership responsibilities to continue advancing economic development in Mercer County.

In addition, Ligaya Kurelko has been promoted to her new position as Director of Workforce Development at PNDC in recognition of her impact in building and supporting workforce initiatives across the region.

Workforce

Training Program Focuses on Upskilling

Manufacturers in Lawrence and Mercer counties have a new resource to strengthen their workforce through the Strategic Early Warning Network's (SEWN) Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) program.



The initiative, coordinated by the Steel Valley Authority, provides reimbursable funding to help businesses upgrade the skills of employees who have been on the job for at least six months. SEWN, a member of LMMC, collaborates with employers and community partners across the region to advance workforce development solutions like this one.

IWT funds can support a wide range of training needs, from technical certifications to leadership development. The goal is to improve employees' skills so they can advance into higher positions or take on more responsibilities in their current roles, creating stronger career pathways and greater workplace stability.

SEWN's IWT program is especially valuable for companies that may be in a "sit-out" year for WEDnet funding or are seeking alternative ways to cover training costs. Reimbursement levels vary depending on company size, and each request is reviewed in coordination with the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry to ensure funding eligibility.

"Incumbent worker training programs are a vital tool for manufacturers, helping to reskill and upskill employees, boost productivity, and reduce turnover," said Deb Lutz, Regional Director at SVA/SEWN. "They not only improve retention but also create clear career pathways, especially valued by younger workers."

Employers interested in applying for IWT funds can learn more by contacting Deb Lutz.

LMMC In The News

- Groups Take Challenges Facing Manufacturers: Business Journal