



## ACE WIRE CONNECTS STUDENTS WITH MANUFACTURING

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## NTMA'S FIRST PRE-APPRENTICES GRADUATE

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## PITTSBURGH CHAPTER

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# A Message from the Chapter Executive

Dear Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA Members,

As I reflect on 2023, I am thankful for your commitment and support of our Chapter, the apprentice program, and BotsIQ. At the annual Holiday Party, we applauded the successes of our association and acknowledged 14 member companies celebrating service milestones. In addition to these companies, every member plays an invaluable part in our shared mission to strengthen the future of manufacturing in southwestern Pennsylvania.

In this edition of our newsletter, we are excited to share some highlights and updates that reflect the achievements of our members and our team. From workforce development efforts to innovative solutions, these activities reflect the combined efforts of our Chapter and showcase the impact we are making in our region.

As we celebrate these accomplishments, let us also recognize the importance of partnership. It is through our collective efforts that we set new standards of excellence. I encourage you to take a moment to share your feedback with us, helping ensure that we are meeting your needs and continuously enhancing our services:

<https://form.jotform.com/conklin/pittsburgh-chapter-NTMA-members>.

Looking ahead, I am confident that our Chapter's strength and dedication will continue to propel us toward greater heights. We have exciting initiatives on the horizon, and your involvement will be crucial in turning these aspirations into reality.

I would like to express my gratitude to each member of the Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA. Your support does not go unnoticed, and together, we will continue to make a positive impact in our industry.

Thank you for your continued dedication, and I look forward to achieving even bigger milestones together.

Best regards,



Michel Conklin, Executive Director, Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA



# Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA Continues to Excel

*By Kevin Hartford, President, Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA*

I hope your New Year has gotten off to a positive start. It's that time of year when I like to remind our members what your NTMA Pittsburgh Chapter is doing for you.

Once again I'm very confident stating that we have the best and most dynamic chapter in the country. If you recall, last January I attended the NTMA Leadership Conference in Albuquerque. During that week it became apparent to me that no other chapter is doing the kind of training & development that we are doing. As you can tell, I'm bullish on our chapter.



Our new Chapter Executive, Michel Conklin, has gotten to a strong start. She attended this year's Leadership Conference last week in San Antonio and came away with a similar impression. But we do have room for improvement. We're in the process of enhancing our programs and increasing our networking activities. With that in mind let's take a deep dive into all we accomplished in the past year and what is still to come this year.

We're up to 160 Apprentices which is even more than where we had before COVID. When I tell people about our program, they're amazed at the opportunity we provide and how an apprentice can graduate with a readymade job and no debt. The fact that we have non-members who pay top dollar to put their own apprentices through our program speaks to the quality of the apprenticeship that's been in place for almost 50 years.

We've grown our chapter to 63 members, having added 7 new members in the past year. We've also added 19 Associate Members. Not only are we the most dynamic chapter (in my opinion) but we're also one of the largest chapters in the country.

I can't emphasize strongly enough how important our Associate Members are to our chapter. They support manufacturers with essential services such as cybersecurity, banking, and machine and tool distribution. They are incredibly important.

Our youth workforce development program, BotsIQ, continues to excel. Our combat robotics program has 53 local schools who have sustained and surpassed the standard that was set

almost 20 years ago. Last year, we hosted both the regional and national BotsIQ competition. In addition to the signature combat robotics program, BotsIQ now offers educational programs to students as young as kindergarten all the way up to age 22.

Michel and her team have become very involved with STEM projects within our local schools. I had the privilege of judging a STEM project at one of the local schools in my own district, Kiski Area. The enthusiasm of the students was infectious. They were designing machines and tools to perform various functions. These were 12-14 year old kids who were totally committed to their project. It was great to see this and even greater to see them work together and come up with ideas that led to solutions.

Finally, we moved into new offices in Bellevue. We took over the second floor of the former Suburban General Hospital. We have home schoolers who come in on a daily basis. We also have BotsIQ teams coming in to work on their combat robot. Michel and her team have their offices in the new space and it's working well.

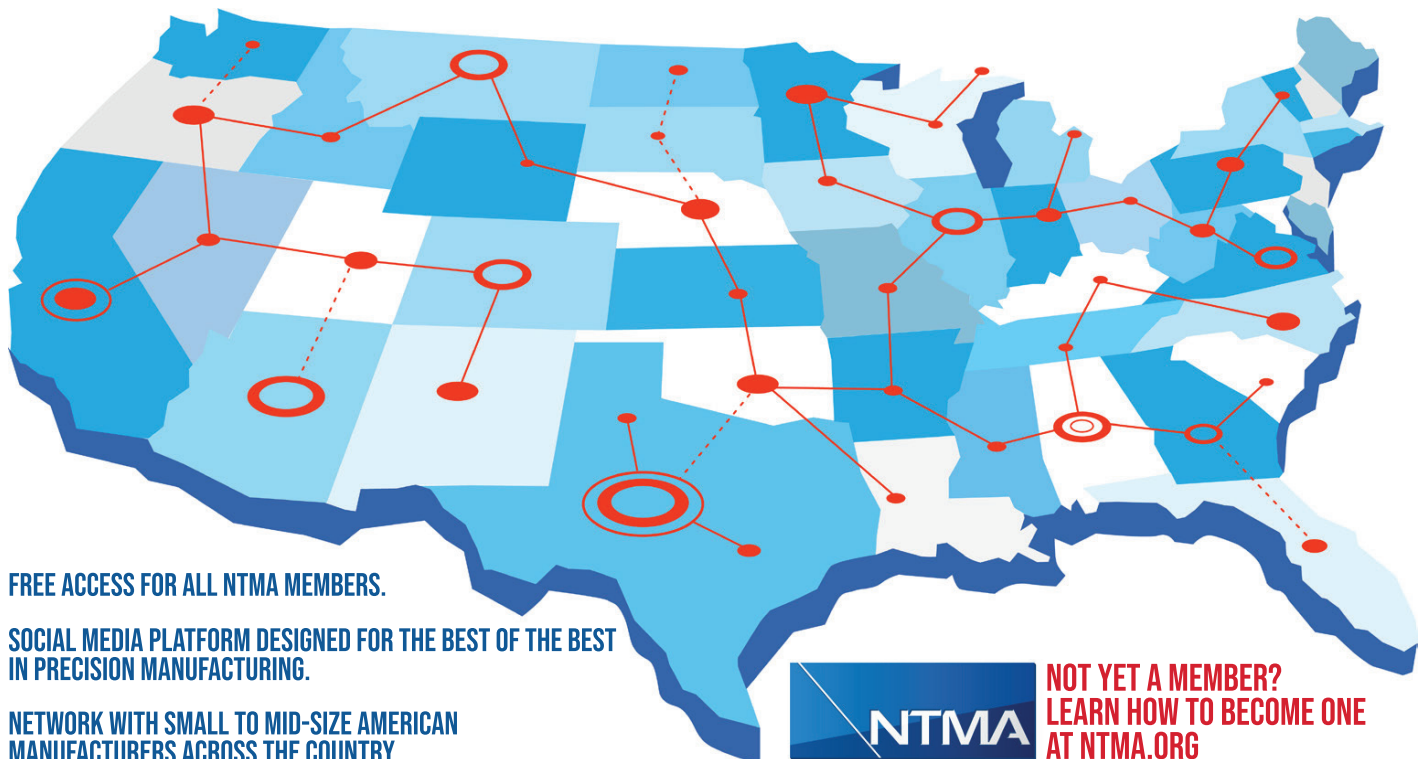
We have some new events coming in 2024. We may be hosting a national conference as well. We'll know more shortly. I'll keep you posted.

Finally, I'd like to thank you all for being members. Without you we don't exist.

# NTMA

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# Ace Wire Spring & Form Connects

*By Julie Bruno, Engineering Assistant, Ace Wire Spring & Form*

Ace Wire Spring & Form Co., Inc. of McKees Rock, Pennsylvania, has been in business for 85 years as of 2024. Ace first became involved in Manufacturing Day in 2016 to expose students to the exciting careers available in modern manufacturing and inspire the next generation of creators. As a family-owned business, Ace wanted young people to see firsthand the advantages of working in a small, family-oriented company in such an impactful industry.

"...it is our duty, as spring makers, to work collaboratively with schools and participate in events such as MFG Day..."

"It is a chance for students to see an incredible variety of careers all performing innovative, impactful, and profitable work," said Linda Froehlich, CEO of Ace Wire Spring and Form, Co. Inc.



Manufacturing Day (also known as MFG DAY) is an initiative of the The Manufacturing Institute, which builds, diversifies, and strengthens the modern manufacturing workforce, with the goal of furthering individual opportunity, community prosperity and a more competitive manufacturing industry.

MFG DAY is officially held on the first Friday in October every year. It is intended to shift perceptions and inspire the next generation of workers to consider manufacturing careers. As spring makers scramble to fill jobs, initiatives like MFG DAY can help create a pool of potential young workers to become the workforce of tomorrow.

This past year, Ace held its Manufacturing Day events on Oct. 17th and 18th, 2023. Thirty students from Rosedale Technical College and fifteen students from City Charter High School participated in tours and presentations about modern manufacturing, each school attending



# Students with Manufacturing

one day of the two-day event. The goal was to support the local manufacturing community and educate the next generation workforce about the creative & exciting world of modern manufacturing.

Students got to watch the creative process of manufacturing during a tour of Ace's factory with the employees demonstrating in detail how the creative process of modern manufacturing works all while producing some springs & wire forms. Some students even took home sample springs they experienced first-hand being manufactured.

“The general assumption today is that the younger generation doesn't like to work with their hands,” said Froehlich. “I believe that's just a common misconception, and it is our duty, as spring makers, to work collaboratively with schools and participate in events such as MFG Day to demonstrate real-world career paths for those with these special interests.”

For more information about Ace Wire Spring & Form, visit [www.acewirespring.com](http://www.acewirespring.com)



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# Inspiring the Next Generation of Manufacturers

*By James Staph, Recruiter, Kurt J. Lesker Company*



Manufacturing holds a crucial role in the U.S. economy, yet it faces challenges like a growing skills gap, negative outside perceptions, and lack of diversity. For years, attracting talent to this industry has been a struggle. How can we draw new talent to manufacturing?

One effective approach is engaging with young people through hands-on educational programs. For instance, at the Kurt J. Lesker Company, we collaborate

with BotsIQ, a manufacturing workforce development program under the Pittsburgh Chapter National Tooling & Machining Association (NTMA). This partnership provides students interested in manufacturing with real-world learning experiences in robotics, engineering, and manufacturing. In BotsIQ, students work in teams to design and build combat robots, gaining valuable mentorship from industry professionals.

We take pride in recruiting BotsIQ alumni for manufacturing roles in our organization. Moreover, we offer facility tours and presentations, showcasing our capabilities, culture, values, and products. Our aim is to inspire students to pursue STEM education and manufacturing careers, addressing the skills gap and promoting workforce diversity. Additionally, we provide apprenticeship opportunities through the NTMA journeyman program.

The Kurt J. Lesker team is passionate about manufacturing and strives to share that passion with students, making manufacturing an exciting career path. Volunteering with BotsIQ offers benefits both for students and for our company, including improved skills, exposure to diverse perspectives, and learning from experienced manufacturing professionals.

By introducing students to the world of manufacturing, we aim to ignite excitement and passion for this dynamic field and career path. To explore exciting career opportunities at the Kurt J. Lesker Company, please visit our company website at [www.lesker.com/](http://www.lesker.com/)

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# IEE EFC Helps Young

*By John Lewis,*

The University of Pittsburgh's Institute for Entrepreneurial Excellence (IEE) has served businesses throughout western Pennsylvania for more than 25 years. As a member of the Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA, companies have access to IEE's wide range of monthly educational events and networking services.

Annually, IEE hosts its Entrepreneurial Fellows Class (EFC), a ten-month long program that offers business leaders support, knowledge, and access to a professional network that strengthens their leadership capabilities. This year, two graduates from the program are Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA members, Lauren Morlacci of L&S Machine Co. and Matt Cowler of Keystone Crane and Hoist.

Morlacci is the Continuous Improvement Manager at L&S Machine, an NTMA member company based in Latrobe, that specializes in tight-tolerance, high-quality machined parts for nuclear, aerospace, medical, and precision-industrial customers. L&S owner, Rob DiNardi, also a graduate of the program, recommended that Morlacci participate.



The EFC's custom curriculum is concise and incorporates the latest subject knowledge taught by faculty with experience in business and entrepreneurship education. Morlacci appreciated the structure of the program, saying, "It is a unique opportunity for local small businesses because it is one calendar year, ten classes total, that teach you what you need to know about running a business successfully. Pitt IEE understands that small business owners don't have time to take on a full MBA, but still deserve a way to learn what's necessary."

# Leaders Get Ahead

## *Marketing and Outreach Coordinator, BotsIQ*

Keystone Crane and Hoist is an Associate Member of the Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA. Based in Canonsburg, Keystone Crane designs, sells, manufactures, and installs overhead crane equipment and services throughout the Tri-State area. As a co-owner of Keystone Crane and Hoist, Cowler joined the program to strengthen his knowledge and skills in managing and growing his family-owned company.

Through the EFC, Cowler learned the value of building and maintaining a professional network. “Business is people,” said Cowler, “I have met so many great people as classmates in the EFC, by joining the organizations like the NTMA, IEE, AISC, AIST, and participating in their events.” He continued to share, “My introduction to the NTMA was because of the EFC’s mentoring program. Kevin Hartford, Pittsburgh Chapter’s Board President, is the mentor that I was fortunate enough to be assigned.”

In all, they both view the program as a great success. Cowler said, “I feel like I have resources that I didn’t know existed and a million things that I can start to implement (a bite at a time) that will help me succeed.” Morlacci added, “Overall, I feel like I have more tools in my toolbelt now, and gaining them was easy; I just had to show up and be willing to learn. The program has had 25 years of trials and feedback to really hone in on what small business owners need to know to succeed, and I am lucky to have participated in the 25th year.”

For more information about the Institute for Entrepreneurial Excellence and their Entrepreneurial Fellows Class visit [entrepreneur.pitt.edu/](http://entrepreneur.pitt.edu/).



PITTSBURGH CHAPTER NTMF / KURT J. LESKER

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Robert Morris University

Westmoreland Preliminary Competitions  
March 12th - Set Up Day  
March 13th & 14th - Competition Days  
Westmoreland County Community College

BotsIQ Finals Competition at PennWest California  
April 24th - Set Up Day | April 26th & 27th - Competition Days  
PennWest California



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[www.botsiqpa.org/volunteer/](http://www.botsiqpa.org/volunteer/)



# Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA Holiday Party Celebrates Its Members

*By John Lewis, Marketing and Outreach Coordinator, BotsIQ*

On December 14th, the Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA held their annual holiday party at the Fox Chapel Golf Club. For the second year, the Chapter cohosted the event with the Women in Manufacturing Western Pennsylvania Chapter.

Over 80 guests from 29 different companies attended, making it a great opportunity for networking with a variety of industry professionals, as well as a chance to enjoy a delicious meal and engage in some fun through a trivia competition hosted by ZOACH Trivia.

The real highlight of the party, however, was the recognition and presentation of service awards to long-time members of the Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA. Chapter Executive Michel Conklin expressed gratitude, stating, "The Pittsburgh Chapter is privileged to boast outstanding members throughout southwestern Pennsylvania. It is an honor to recognize those members dedicated to advancing both their companies and the U.S. manufacturing industry through their commitment to the NTMA." Member companies being recognized that had representatives at the party were presented with their awards and recognition at the event. Those who were not able to attend will have their awards presented by Conklin.

The full list of companies receiving a service award can be found on the next page.



In 2023, the Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA experienced significant growth, made possible by the invaluable connections and support of its members. While the manufacturing industry expands nationwide, it's the steadfast commitment of these dedicated companies that lays the foundation to sustain and bolster that growth.



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 L & S Machine Company, LLC - 5 years  
 Pennsylvania Drilling Company - 5 years  
 Specialized Welding - 5 years  
 Cygnus Manufacturing Company - 10 years

LRG Corporation - 15 years  
 Painter Tool, Inc. - 15 years  
 Astley Precision Machine Co. - 25 years  
 Custom Tool & Grinding Inc. - 25 years  
 Die Quip Corp. - 25 years  
 Summit Machine Company - 35 years  
 Farzati Manufacturing Corp. - 40 years



**Cygnus Manufacturing Company**

**L&S Machine Company, LLC**

# NTMA and Northgate's First Group

*By John Lewis, Marketing and Outreach Coordinator, BotsIQ*



In December 2020, the Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA registered its Robotics Technician Pre-Apprenticeship with the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry. The program was designed to support students participating in the Chapter's youth workforce development program, BotsIQ, and provide opportunities for them to gain in-demand skills and knowledge in the areas of safety, math and measurement, manufacturing, electronics, and robotics.

With the opening of the Pittsburgh Chapter's new Training & Education Center in June, BotsIQ partnered with the local school district, Northgate, to offer students a brand-new opportunity with its Robotics Technician Pre-Apprenticeship. BotsIQ's program is designed to help students transition from high school to manufacturing industry apprenticeships. Currently, it articulates with six different apprenticeship programs offered by Catalyst Connection, Community College of Allegheny County, German American Chamber of Commerce, and New Century Careers. It also offers college credits with PennWest California and Westmoreland County Community College.

In this pilot, four students were enrolled and worked diligently throughout the fall semester to learn about and gain real experience in manufacturing. The agreement with Northgate required that the students attend school every morning and leave after lunch to walk to BotsIQ's office where they would train until the end of the school day at 3:30. Northgate's Guidance Counselor Zack Burns worked closely with BotsIQ's staff to identify students who would benefit from this educational experience and who had an interest in a technical career.

One pre-apprentice joined the program out of general interest and because his class schedule fit conveniently with the program's schedule. He shared, "I don't know what career I might want in the future, but this program definitely helped me consider manufacturing more than I ever had before."





# of Pre-Apprentices Graduate

Another student shared a different perspective, saying “I’ve been committed to what I want to do for a long time, computer hardware engineering. Even though this program is about manufacturing, I learned some things that I think will help me in the future.” He added that he believes this program would absolutely help prepare students for life in the manufacturing industry.

BotsIQ’s Robotics Technician Pre-Apprenticeship includes topics such as CNC machining, computer-aided design, soldering and electronics, measurement, safety protocols, cover letter and resume writing, and everything in-between. For these students, it was their first opportunity to experience many of the subjects and use industrial equipment. Their instructor, BotsIQ Teaching Fellow Hunter Sasse, said “The students have done very well. This was the first time they were able to apply things that they learned in the traditional classroom and use equipment like our desktop CNC machines.”

The students seem to agree. One pre-apprentice explains, “The program was difficult but very fun, and much better than staying at Northgate all day.” Another added, “Having a self-reliant program where you actually do things instead of just being taught all the time was a great experience.” In fact, all four students said that they would recommend BotsIQ’s pre-apprenticeship to their classmates at Northgate.

All four pre-apprentices successfully completed the training and graduated from the program on January 19th. Currently, BotsIQ is working with Northgate to enroll students for the spring semester.

To learn more about BotsIQ, visit [www.botsiqpa.org](http://www.botsiqpa.org).

A pre-apprenticeship is a training program designed to prepare individuals for entry into a formal apprenticeship program or specific industry. It serves as a foundational step for individuals who may lack the necessary skills, experience, or qualifications to directly enter employment. In the state of Pennsylvania, pre-apprenticeships receive oversight from the Apprenticeship and Training Office within the PA Department of Labor & Industry.

Pre-Apprenticeships are required to have an approved training and curriculum that introduces technical skills and knowledge through hands-on learning and direct instruction.

For manufacturers, pre-apprenticeship training is an excellent method for recruiting and pre-screening candidates who are qualified and job-ready, increasing the likelihood of successful completion of their apprenticeship program.

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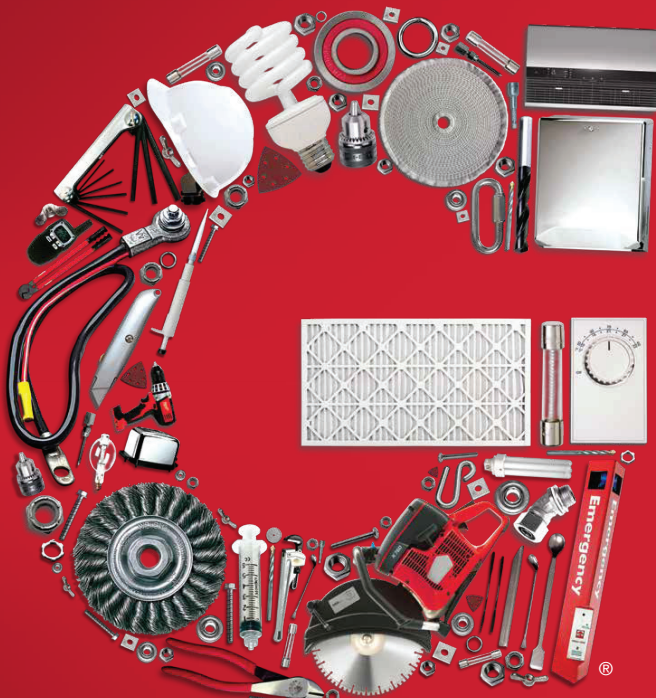
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<https://botsiqpa.org/event/haas-factory-outlet-botsiq-vip-networking-event/>



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# Equipping Women for Success in

*By Gretchen Moore, Executive Director, Women in*

A decade of concentrated investment in upskilling and STEM education for girls has resulted in more women working in manufacturing. The positive implications for individuals, families, and communities are far-reaching as women working in manufacturing earn 16% more than the national median annual income for women employed in other industries.

This is good news for manufacturers as well, as research shows that diverse workplaces see higher revenue growth, greater innovation, and stronger employee recruitment and retention than their less-equitable counterparts.

Women in Manufacturing (WiM) is a trade association dedicated to supporting, promoting, and inspiring women who work in manufacturing. With more than 24,000 members, WiM has grown to be the only national and global trade association solely dedicated to providing year-round support to women in industry.

In 2016, WiM established a partner organization, the Women in Manufacturing Education Foundation (WiMEF), to provide valuable resources and training to women at every stage of their manufacturing careers.

WiMEF's education programs are 100% virtual and include one-on-one coaching, facilitated peer networking, skills assessments, and a curriculum that provides practical strategies and tactics for women to lead and succeed in manufacturing.

Curriculums were developed around core competencies that manufacturing employers identify as necessary leadership skills including problem-solving, emotional intelligence, leadership fundamentals, time management, and strategic communication.

NTMA member companies receive free membership to WiM. To apply, sign-up as a corporate member and reference "NTMA" under parent organization.

Visit  
[www.womeninmanufacturing.org/membership-information](http://www.womeninmanufacturing.org/membership-information)  
for more information.

# Manufacturing

## *Manufacturing Education Foundation*

Women in Manufacturing Education Foundation programs include:

Empowering Women in Production is a 20-week course designed to support the leadership development of women working in production, production support, and shop floor roles. The program includes learn-at-your-own-pace coursework, a StrengthsFinder skills assessment, one-on-one coaching, and peer networking.

The Management Development Program provides new and aspiring supervisors, managers, and team leaders with training for managerial success. The program is an interactive series of live, virtual workshops and includes a DiSC assessment, one-on-one coaching, and peer networking.

Leadership Institute is an executive education program for women working in male-dominated fields. The 5-month program is offered in partnership with Case Western Reserve University where participants learn from world-class faculty as they establish a network of peers, participate in coaching, and perform an ESCI skills assessment.

WiMEF's Virtual Learning Series are monthly webinars featuring industry experts providing action-oriented and solution-driven programming to encourage success in the manufacturing sector.

Programs are open to all women working in manufacturing, and WiM members receive registration discounts.

To learn more about WiM, visit [womeninmanufacturing.org](http://womeninmanufacturing.org)

To learn more about WiMEF, visit [www.wimef.org](http://www.wimef.org)



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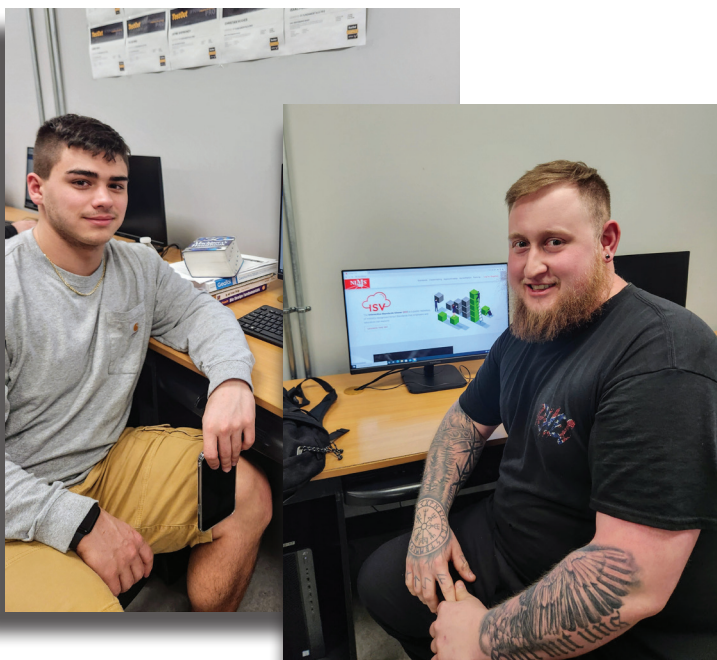
# NIMS Credentials Can Certify Your Employee's Skills

*By Liz Blashock, Apprenticeship Program Manager, PGH NTMA*

National Institute of Metalworking Skills (NIMS) credentials are earned by students, trainees, apprentices, employees, and military personnel nationwide and around the world. By earning NIMS credentials, these individuals secure a competitive edge when applying for jobs because they have demonstrated that their skills meet the industry established standards. NIMS credentials are considered a professional portable credential; having earned one NIMS credential says that your knowledge and skill on that topic are on par with anyone in the country.

Several companies participating in the Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA Apprentice Training Program require NIMS credentials as part of their apprentices' training, rewarding them for successful completion.

The Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA is a proud supporter of NIMS and allows all apprentices the opportunity to achieve as many credentials as they desire at no cost to them. Throughout the program year, open NIMS labs are offered where apprentices can work on their chosen parts. These parts are then inspected for accuracy by an NTMA Member company that serves on the Chapter's MET-TEC Committee. Upon passing inspection, apprentices are then eligible to take the NIMS online exam. Once the exam is passed, the credential is earned.



A big congratulations to apprentices from member companies, Hamill Manufacturing Company, IMI PBM, and Penn State Tool & Die who, in total, earned 20 NIMS credentials in the months of November, December, and January.

If you'd like more information about NIMS or how to incorporate NIMS into your training program, please reach out to Liz Blashock at [blashock@pghntma.org](mailto:blashock@pghntma.org) or at 412.212.6868; or visit [www.nims-skills.org/credentialing](http://www.nims-skills.org/credentialing)

# FS-Elliott Leads the Pack in a New Market

*By John Lewis, Marketing and Outreach Coordinator, BotsIQ*



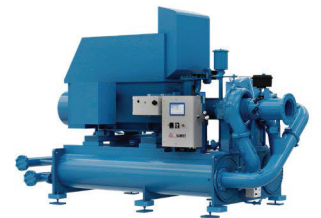
In 2023, Fortune Business Insights valued the global electric vehicle (EV) market size at over \$500 billion and projected it to triple in size to \$1,579 billion by 2030. Driven by increased environmental awareness, government incentives, technological advancements, and an increase in consumer interest in sustainable transportation, this surge equals opportunity for US manufacturing.

One Pittsburgh Chapter NTMA member, FS-Elliott, is capitalizing on this opportunity, applying their expertise in engineering and manufacturing industrial air compressors to the EV industry. The Director of Operations, John Sinclair, states “We are the leading manufacturer in supplying compressed air equipment for the electric

vehicle industry in the United States, and we are a major supplier internationally as well.” He went on to say, “A year and a half ago, the supply chain wasn’t in such good shape, and while we had our obstacles, manufacturing was not one of them. We machine, fabricate, assemble, and test all in western Pennsylvania, as we have for 20 years.”

Michael Spena, FS-Elliott’s Director of Engineering, added, “In the engineering space, there are very stringent requirements on compressed air needs. We’ve been able to respond to that through our investments in the latest analytical tools and streamlined processes in order to deliver to our clients what they need when they need it. The EV industry is only one example of the growth of FS-Elliott into new markets.”

Illustrated here are machines from the Polaris line of industrial air compressors, gaining popularity in part due to the EV industry's growing demands. Sinclair highlighted the company's commitment to manufacturing in Pennsylvania, where they've enhanced testing capabilities, incorporated advanced machining technologies, and embraced robotics for swift customer response. FS-Elliott's organizational ethos revolves around continuous improvement, lean principles, and an unwavering focus on customer demand and satisfaction, driving them to innovate and overcome any obstacles in their path.



To learn more about FS-Elliott, visit  
<https://www.fs-elliott.com/>






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## PGH NTMA CALENDAR:

- 02/16 PGH NTMA/MSC Apprentice Competition
- 02/21 Girls Exploring Engineering Day
- 03/07 BotsIQ Prelims at Robert Morris
- 03/13 BotsIQ Prelims at Westmoreland
- 03/14 BotsIQ Prelims at Westmoreland
- 03/27 Girls Exploring Tech Day
- 04/26 BotsIQ Finals Competition
- 04/26 Haas & BotsIQ VIP Networking Event
- 04/27 BotsIQ Finals Competition
- 05/17 'Burgh Bash Competition
- 05/18 'Burgh Bash Competition
- 06/05 PGH NTMA Apprentice Graduation

For times, locations and details, please visit:

[www.PGHNTMA.org](http://www.PGHNTMA.org)



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