

SWWDB Update



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A publication describing matters of interest regarding the services and programs of the Southwest Wisconsin Workforce Development Board

E-HUB LEADS HIM FROM FOOD TO CHROMING

When Chad Brannon enrolled in SWWDB's E-Hub program in May, 2010, he planned on starting a fast food business named 'Mad Dog's' across the street from Hononegah High School in Rockton, IL. When the six-week program was over, he knew building a business using an emerging product called Cosmic Chrome was a much better choice.

"It made sense, both financially and from the standpoint it is a fast-growing, potential-laden business that utilizes 'green technologies'," Brannon said. His business, called Borderline Chroming, is located in back of the Turtle Tap and ballpark at 1341 Marinoff Dr., Beloit and is just taking off.

Despite the fact the business has only started offering services since the beginning of March, 2011 (they began prepping their facility, located in a former storage building, in November, 2010), and that there has been virtually no advertising



Chad Brannon (right) and partner Nate Martindale stand in front of one of their spray booths with samples of some of their small jobs in back at their new business in Beloit—Borderline Chroming.

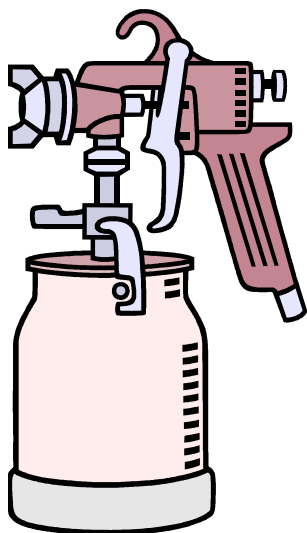
except by word-of-mouth, Chad and his partner, long-time friend Nate Martindale, have enough business that it keeps them busy at least eight hours a day, plus it is growing. They also have part-time staff they can call in when needed. "We had work before we even opened up," Brannon stated. He said their

variety allows them to handle many types of jobs and products that virtually no other business (or very few) can handle, plus according to Brannon, they are the only such type of business in the Midwest, the closest he is aware of being in Cleveland, OH. "This newer process is now

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'E-Hub taught me how to research and learn techniques to start this business. I can't say enough about how E-Hub helped me to get to this point.'

**---Chad Brannon
Stateline Chroming**



being incorporated by big business, but we can make this available and affordable to individuals and small businesses in need of plating," Brannon explained.

Traditional chromium, nickel, copper, and other metals, much of them coming from South America, contain cyanide. Brannon says his process is safe, durable, flexible, and much less expensive. Chromium is just the top coat—the base is a bluish paint but all coatings are extremely durable.

"E-Hub (Entrepreneurial) taught me how to research and learn techniques to start this business," Brannon said, indicating that while prepping he uses the same basic methods, although various metals need to be handled in specific ways. "It's like applying a layer of skin," he explained. "I can't say enough about how E-Hub helped me to get to this point," he added.

The area's demographics, which include a large number of boats, motorcycles, recreational vehicles, etc. helped convince Chad there would be a good customer base. It also helped that he had his own 2006 Grand Prix that he 'chromed.' He said a lot of people asked him if he could do the same to their vehicles. "I knew there was a good market for this," he said.

Whereas much of his initial business has been centered around smaller products and vehicular projects, Borderline Chroming has also expanded into areas such as tank plating, jewelry, and even gold plating. "This is more like a skilled trade, where we can utilize five or six methods to coat not only in traditional chroming but also copper, nickel and painting," he said, adding they have about 30 colors they can use. A simple project usually takes a few hours to complete. "We can complete a car in less than an hour, but need a couple of hours of drying," he added.

Both the 26-year old Martindale, a Beloit Turner graduate and Army veteran who earned his culinary arts degree from Blackhawk Tech, and Brannon love food

preparation. However, they both realize that business is very costly to get into and fluctuates greatly. "There's actually some similarities in both fields—you need to attend to details, measuring is very important, and you need consistency," Martindale said.

Still, getting into this new business was not inexpensive. The capital equipment and materials are quite costly. But if necessary, they have good re-sale value. "Just a small bottle of liquid can cost up to \$500," Brannon said.

But his commitment to the community helped him in obtaining his loan. "I have always supported the community and will continue to do so," Brannon said. He also has and will continue to offer jobs and opportunities to the 'underappreciated' in the community who need help. "I don't plan on moving—I will be in this community a long time," he emphasized. "I want to leave my mark. Ken Hendricks was like an idol to me." He was also assisted through a bequest from his grandfather's estate and his father's help on getting into the field initially.

But it was E-Hub that really set Brannon on this path. "Out of all of the great things E-Hub has to offer, the biggest was the teacher's ability to teach you the true meaning of an entrepreneur and how to find the inner entrepreneur in yourself," he said. "I learned in class that to be successful, you must be ahead of the game and find your niche. I think we're on our way!"



HE COMBINES BUSINESS CLASSES, MECH DESIGN INTO NEW CAREER

When 25-year-old Ryan Wilson of Janesville lost his job when the Beloit Corporation closed its doors in 1999, he returned to school at Blackhawk Tech, earning his associate degree in Mechanical Design and was soon hired by Sundstrand. When Sundstrand laid him off in 2009, he again returned to school, this time at Upper Iowa University's campus at BTC, where he earned his bachelor's degree in Business Administration and Management. That effort landed him a job at Ingersoll Milling, Rockford, a place he hopes will provide more occupational longevity than the prior two. He is a Mechanical Engineer there.

"It wouldn't have been possible to complete these classes without the TRA and Dislocated Worker funds," he said. The Trade Readjustment Act funds helped him when the Beloit Corp went bankrupt, and the WIA Dislocated Worker funds helped him to attend Upper Iowa, which was critical since he is supporting a wife and two children. Despite the obstacles, Ryan has not missed a class and maintained a 3.75 Grade Point Average (GPA). He has also received some support from the companies when returning to the classroom.

"By combining engineering and business classes, I

believe it makes me marketable as far as potential jobs," Ryan explained. He said he's not sure if he'll continue on to further education, but his background and experience should serve him well in his current job. He's hopeful there will not be any further layoffs or plant closures, but if it should happen again, his background and diversity should make him a very desirable candidate. "I like my job at Ingersoll," he added. "I'm hopeful they will continue to be as busy [as they are now] long into the future."



HOLLY CHARLIER FOLLOWS DAUGHTER'S ADVICE

It took a while, but Holly Charlier eventually followed her daughter's advice and now she's working in a field she just loves—as a Pharmacy Technician.

Unfortunately, it took a plant closing to get her into that career field. But now that she's working at the William S. Middleton Veteran's Affairs Hospital in Madison, she knows it's a perfect fit for her.

"I did my first clinical at Walgreen's pharmacy, and I would be standing up all day counting pills," she said. "I knew that retail was not for me. But my second clinical was in the hospital at the Veteran's hospital, and I just loved it. In fact, they hired me a few weeks before I even completed my Southwest Tech College program, and moved my pay start date to the next open pay period," she explained. She graduated with high honors in May, 2009, and she just completed her second year at the Vet's location.

Holly utilized the WIA Dislocated Worker Program to return to school following the closing of the Merkle-Korff Co., Richland Center, where she had worked for 21 years as a Product

Controller/Receptionist through October, 2007. The TRA funds assisted her with tuition, testing, and transportation costs, while WIA assisted with child care (she has guardianship of two of her four grandchildren). "Being out of school for almost 30 years, it was scary but also very interesting," Holly said. Since she couldn't get into the one-year program until the semester break, she took computer classes to help hone her skills. "It was a wonderful experience. I was really lucky to get into a program like this," she said. "It helped me tremendously and I'd like to thank them so much for having this backing and support."

Holly's daughter, who also works at the Vet's Hospital as a Nurse Practitioner, knew her 51-year-old mother's interest and background would fit perfectly in the Pharmacy Tech field. In fact, since it is about 70 miles one way to the hospital, Holly often carools, and when the weather is bad, will stay at her daughter's overnight, something she did three times this past winter.

It may have taken a while, but it appears Holly has found her niche!



JOB FAIRS ATTRACT THOUSANDS

In April, the Rock County Job Center's Employer Relations Team hosted three on-site, industry-related job fairs. One was a day-long fair dedicated to manufacturing and related employers, there was another for health care-related occupations, and still a third one for other industries.

Extensive marketing efforts were supported by local media and businesses.

Job Center staff assisted both the businesses and those attending. A conservative estimate on the number of participants was over 2,200—more than 1,200 for the manufacturing session, 600 for health care, and 400 for the general event.

A total of 23 employers plus two colleges participated in the April 18 manufacturing session. Types of jobs included anything from assemblers, engineers, welders and forklift operators to machinists, quality control, press operators and warehouse personnel.

Seven companies, one military recruiter and one college participated in the April 21 health care session, which featured jobs such as RNs, medical techs, residential and personal care staff and similar positions.

Eight employers and three colleges participated in the April 25 general fair. Included were positions such as child care worker, store managers, customer service reps, bus drivers, sales staff and more.

At the conclusion of each event, employers were asked to complete a short survey about their experience, with over 90 percent doing so. The vast majority indicated they were extremely pleased with the marketing, organization and turnout.

The Job Center Employer Relations Team tentatively plans to host another series of job fairs in September, 2011.



Job-seekers fill out applications and related forms in anticipation of meeting with potential employers at the April 18 manufacturing session.



Representatives of Provisur Technologies, Whitewater, a worldwide leader in food processing equipment production, talk about potential jobs to one of the participants at the April 18 session.



Regal Beloit reps, including Hiring Manager Art Kapitanoff (center in white shirt) speak to a potential employee.

HE DECIDES STAYING IN THE AREA IS BEST CHOICE

When GM offered Jeremy Torpy a chance to relocate to keep his position with them, he didn't hesitate. "I love the change of the seasons and rather than move south (where all the GM plants were), I would only consider possibly going north," he said. "So it was time to part ways with GM."

Instead, he opted to return to school to train in Blackhawk Technical College's Information Technology-Networking program, where he graduated in May, 2010. It led to his being hired by TDS Telecom in Monroe, WI, where he completed his three-week training period in early May. "I thought returning to school would be a major adjustment, but it really wasn't," he said. "I progressed very well through all the classes and enjoyed the challenge."

The 39-year-old Torpy, who is engaged, spent 13 years at GM. Prior to that he worked at Happy Joe's from 1991-97. While his new job at TDS doesn't pay as much as the GM position, he does have excellent advancement opportunities and benefits. He started out on the telephone help desk as a customer repair advisor, handling problems with dial-up internet and similar problems. He'll then move on to DSL and cable training. "This is a perfect starting position," he stated. "A friend of mine started in the same position and quickly worked his way to other positions with companies like Mercy and the Rock County IT department."

Dislocated Worker program funds assisted Jeremy to attend school, covering the majority of his tuition and books costs. He used only 11 weeks of Unemployment

Insurance (UI) benefits this year.

"Everything in the process worked very well," he said, adding that the career readiness certifications and services at the Job Center allowed him to achieve success with few problems. He located the TDS position on the Job Center of Wisconsin web site.

And that allowed him to stay in the area he loves without having to move. "I'm grateful for all the support I received," he added. "I couldn't have asked for anything more."



"Everything in the process worked very well. I'm grateful for all the support I received."
--Jeremy Torpy



Lead mentors for the E-Hub program, Julie Fisher (in black top to left of E-Hub sign) and Amy Loudeneck (in dress to right of sign), pose with several of the 2010-11 Rock County E-Hub graduates after the program's 2nd annual recognition ceremony held May 23 at the Rotary Gardens in Janesville. The Rock County E-Hub program recognized its 19 graduates of the 2010-11 program, as well as program mentors and other supporters.

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See us at:
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SWWDB CO-SPONSORS STEM-POSIUM

Recognizing the value of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) in career preparation and advancement, businesses, education and community agencies in southwest Wisconsin have led the way to better prepare today's and tomorrow's workers for more demanding careers in technical fields. STEMposium, held at the Belmont (WI) Convention Center April 28 and co-sponsored by the SWWDB, attracted more than 300 persons to see the work and innovative models of Project Lead the Way (PLTW). The event, titled the Southwest Academy for 21st Century Excellence, featured displays from high, middle and elementary school students' projects.

PLTW, an applied learning curriculum, is educating graduates who are better prepared for post-secondary education and more demanding careers. This year six school districts are offering at least two PLTW courses, while five more are starting next year. Southwest Technical College has embraced PLTW and hosted the conference as well as bringing students from member schools together for advanced classes in Fennimore. PLTW complements existing WI initiatives such as Grow WI, the WI Covenant, and the Youth Apprenticeship Program. It has been recognized as a premier education program by the WI Technology Council. The program aligns with national and state standards in math, science and technology.



STUDENTS LEARN PROCESS 'FROM START TO FINISH'

As a part of the Engineering Design and Development or EDD course, 'students learn the design process from start to finish,' said instructor Scott Swan. He said they learn even more when things don't go as planned. Some of this year's projects included an automatic milk mixer for feeding calves, a mounted cell phone induction charger, a multi-purpose powered toothbrush, and a shoe that creates and stores electricity when walking that can be used to charge electronic devices.

Matt Schreck, Platteville, developer of the phone charger, believes in PLTW. "It's really been great with all the hands-on work that I've been able to do," he says. "I've learned a lot about the design process and other stuff that I wouldn't have thought about otherwise." He plans on studying mechanical engineering at the Milwaukee School of Engineering, after which he hopes to work in the automotive industry.

"We've been a big proponent of this type of education for many years," says Dr. Robert T. Borremans, Executive Director of the SWWDB. "While we have many individuals we work with who need short-term training to get back into the workforce quickly, there is also a huge need for persons to train for jobs that lead us back as a world leader in innovation and energy-efficient methods of manufacturing," he added, indicating the SWWDB is a big supporter of all training which leads to productive, family-supporting jobs.



About the SWWDB...

The Southwest Wisconsin Workforce Development Board (SWWDB) serves a six-county area in the Southwest corner of Wisconsin. We are a dynamic collaboration of private and public leaders working together

to promote innovation and quality in local workforce development activities.

The Board meets on a quarterly schedule to address workforce development issues and provide

oversight to the eight Southwest Job Center offices located in the area. Committee members meet on an as-needed basis to provide guidance and direction on topical issues.