



News release

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**Area Youth Apprenticeship program
celebrated at area business**

Youth Apprenticeship represents a great way for high school students to discover their future career today by offering real-world learning while earning a paycheck and, for some, even college credit.

Many students who live within the Gateway Technical College District already benefit from Youth Apprenticeship and were present at a Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development event hosted by Reader Precision Solutions at their Elkhorn Precision Plus facility to honor the program.

“This program is great for students because they can apply what they are learning in the classroom to an actual job,” said Katie Graf, Gateway Technical College director of High School Partnerships.

Graf said employers help develop “on the job learning guides” for students to follow, ensuring they are doing meaningful work in their specific area. Students are also paid at least minimum wage, and Reader officials indicated at the DWD event that their wage level is higher, with youth apprentices earning at least \$17 an hour. They also indicated there is strong buy-in from parents and noted that some apprentices have continued on working for Reader.

Gateway helps set up and manage the consortium of 14 high schools within the college's district that have opted to participate in the program. When needed, Gateway also helps students enroll in college classes they might need to continue their apprenticeship.

"This is one of the programs at the college that has helped forge a strong connection for students between secondary school, post-secondary school and the workforce," says Graf.

Graf points to increased participation in the program as an indication of its potential for students too. After starting out with about 30 apprentices 10 years ago, in the 2023-24 Academic Year, 176 youth apprentices participated in the program with 148 area employers. They earned a total of \$1.12 million and worked more than 80,000 hours.

Gateway Technical College's mission is to deliver industry-focused education that is flexible, accessible and affordable for our diverse community. The college collaborates with communities in Kenosha, Racine and Walworth counties to ensure economic growth and viability by providing education, training, leadership and technological resources to meet the changing needs of students, employers and communities.

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