

# THE GAZETTE

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## Ohio treasurer recognizes skilled factory employees

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The Gazette

MEDINA — Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel recognized employees at a local business as part of a program to inspire a new generation of skilled factory workers.

Mandel recognized three workers at Rico Manufacturing, 691 W. Liberty St., Wednesday afternoon as part of his new “Ohio Strong” initiative.

The program is designed to encourage more young people to seek training and careers in manufacturing and other skilled trades by presenting people in those fields as role models.

“I believe these folks are the backbone of Ohio’s economy and in order to have healthy finances and grow the economy, we need to inspire the next generation to enter the skilled trades,” Mandel said.

The three employees honored are Patrick J. Damon, weld department leadman and an employee of 15 years; Kurt J. Visscher, a machinist of 10 years; and Rowan B. Decoster, a subassembly supervisor and 14-year employee.

“I know the guys are really excited,” Rico CEO David Mueller said. “We are really passionate about manufacturing, and having good people is a great thing during a time when quality candidates are getting harder to find.”



DAN POMPIILI / GAZETTE

Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel, far left, visits Rico Manufacturing on Wednesday in Medina to recognize three employees for excellence in manufacturing and skilled trade work as part of his Ohio Strong program. Receiving commendations were, from left, Patrick J. Damon, Kurt J. Visscher and Rowan B. Decoster.

Rico, founded in 1984, makes dye- and material-handling equipment and custom-built lift trucks. The company has 80 employ-

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ees, more than half with at least 10 years with the company.

Mandel told employees that the retirement of baby boomers has left a 600,000-worker gap in the field of manufacturers and skilled trade workers.

Mandel cited a Bureau of Labor Statistics study that shows 48 percent of college graduates are working in fields that don't require college degrees, and would be better served and better serve the state if they had chosen a vocational trade.

“We need to get shop class back in schools,” Mandel said.

He said school districts in every corner of the state are abandoning shop class while telling students the only way

to succeed is with a four-year degree.

“We need guidance counselors telling students that a four-year degree is one way to be successful,” Mandel said, “but another way is a career in manufacturing or welding, machining or pipefitting.”

Mandel thanked the employees for what he said is a career that strengthens America’s national security.

“When I grew up, we competed with Indiana and Michigan, but now we are competing with India and China,” he said. “A manufacturing-based economy makes us a stronger nation.”

Companies that wish to nominate a worker for an Ohio Strong excellence award can visit [www.ohiotreasurer.gov/ohiostrong](http://www.ohiotreasurer.gov/ohiostrong).

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