



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

By Matthew Kent | Chillicothe Gazette

CHILLICOTHE — Making a career out of a job is what a path into the skilled trades is all about, and it's a path Commercial Vehicle Group plant materials supervisor Eric Graves has been navigating very successfully.

Graves received special recognition Wednesday at the Chillicothe manufacturing plant as part of a statewide awards program designed to showcase successful skilled trades workers in an effort to inspire young people to go into those fields.

Plant manager Ron Gray described Graves, who has worked at CVG for nine years, as a person who often goes above and beyond his job responsibilities.

"He'll do more for others than for himself," Gray said.

"He's dependable and willing to do what he needs to do. He's made a career out of a job."

Gray said while the company doesn't experience a shortage of applications for job openings, a career in the skilled trades can provide a rewarding professional life, and he encouraged people to consider a career path in one of those fields.

"Find something you might like to do," Gray said. "You can make a career that can support your family and live a good life."

The CVG plant in Chillicothe has about 125 employees and makes interior products for the heavy-duty trucking industry for employers like Kenworth and John Deere, in addition to the agricultural and construction markets.

Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel toured the plant Wednesday to provide the recognition to Graves through the new Ohio Strong awards program, an initiative launched by the treasurer's office to honor men and women in the skilled trades. Mandel said he came up with the awards program after touring the state and reaching out to John Ratzenberger, who appeared on the sitcom "Cheers," for advice. Ratzenberger once had a television show known as "Made in America" that focused on manufacturing.

"Every year nationally, there's jobs in these fields that go unfilled," Mandel said, offering the opinion that more investment is needed for vocational schools such as Pickaway-Ross Career & Technology Center. "There's not enough young people going into skilled trades."

Mandel also said he wants school districts across the state to bring back shop classes and that employees like those at CVG should be seen as role models in society, rather than athletes or actors.

In a recent Gazette story, Gary Robinson, who oversees job training programs at Pickaway-Ross Career & Technology Center, said a robust local job market awaits 2014 graduates who are looking to join a skilled-trade workforce that's been depleted by retiring baby boomers. The skills gap has become a real concern for employers, which is why Pickaway-Ross tries to align its



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programs with their needs. Meanwhile, employers and trade unions are going to unprecedented lengths to not only recruit but also help prepare students for the opportunities, including buying specialized equipment for schools such as Pickaway-Ross.

Companies who want to nominate workers for an Ohio Strong award can go to www.ohiotreasurer.gov/ohiostrong.

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