



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel visited SUPERB Industries Inc. in Sugarcreek on Thursday to present Amy Cappon with an Ohio Strong Award.

By Lee Morrison | New Philadelphia Times-Reporter

Forget Justin Bieber and Kanye West, Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel wants today's youth to look to people like Amy Cappon as role models.

Mandel visited SUPERB Industries Inc. in Sugarcreek on Thursday to present Cappon with an Ohio Strong Award.

"I'm sick and tired of hearing about people like Justin Bieber and Kanye West as being role models for our kids," Mandel said. "I think the real role models for our kids are men and women who work in places like SUPERB. People like Amy, and others, who work hard every day to make our economy and our state strong."

In March, Mandel launched Ohio Strong "to help recognize men and women in manufacturing and the skilled trades, and raise public awareness to encourage more people to pursue careers in these fields."

Cappon received the first Ohio Strong Award in Tuscarawas County. So far, about 50 awards have been presented at 19 businesses statewide.

Mandel said he hopes that young people hearing about the recognition might be inspired to consider going into these careers. He stressed the importance of manufacturing jobs, saying that the nation can't thrive with a service-based economy.

"One of the problems we're seeing in every corner of Ohio, including here in Tuscarawas County, is that as the Baby Boomers are retiring, we're seeing a shortage of young people entering the skilled trades — welders, pipe-fitters, electricians, carpenters, machinists and other skilled tradesmen and women," he said.

According to a recent Skills Gap Survey by the Manufacturing Institute, about 600,000 manufacturing jobs are unfilled nationwide because employers can't find qualified workers, he said.

Compounding the issue is that many high schools have eliminated shop class, he said. Instead, he contends that more money should be invested in vocational education and training for skilled trades jobs.

"We need to do a better job of not only telling youth that it's OK to go into those careers, but that they are some of the most important jobs there are," Mandel said.

He called such jobs the backbone of the economy and society, as well as being important to national security. He stressed that many of today's manufacturing jobs are in clean facilities with advanced technology, no longer the dirty, dangerous plants of the past.



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He decried an “oversaturation of liberal arts degrees,” adding that a Bureau of Labor Statistics study recently found that 48 percent of college graduates are working in jobs that don’t require a four-year degree.

“There are young people throughout America who have four-year liberal arts degrees, thousands of dollars in debt, and are serving coffee at Starbucks or working part-time at the mall,” Mandel said. “I believe that many of these young people would have been better off with a two-year skilled trade education, technical education or apprenticeship training with actual skills to secure a well-paying job and many opportunities for upward mobility.”

SUPERB President John Miller strives to spread the word about opportunities with the manufacturing company. An open house benefit July 11 attracted 448 people to tour the facility, with stops where employees explained processes and products. Miller had the same tour stops set up Thursday, and kept the first shift over so that Mandel could see the company in full operation.

SUPERB Industries Inc. a high-tech, high-volume producer of engineered plastic and metal components with affiliated operations in Walnut Creek and a distribution center in Hong Kong, as the company manufactured more than 135 million components in 2012 and shipped over 60 percent of them to countries including Mexico and China.

Miller said the SUPERB Technical Institute program pays people to learn while working, which can lead to jobs paying \$40,000 to \$80,000 annually.

Cappon was one of six graduates in the 2014 SUPERB Technical Institute stamping press technician program.

After the tour, Mandel addressed employees and presented the Ohio Strong Award to Cappon.

The award states, in part, “Your dedication to your trade makes you a valuable asset to SUPERB Technical Institute and the State of Ohio. As a dedicated Stamping Press Technician and the first woman to graduate from SUPERB, you have demonstrated a commitment to your craft, and a strong work ethic and high integrity, exemplifying the characteristics of this award. You are a role model for your colleagues and embody what it means to be Ohio Strong.”

Afterward, Cappon, 52, said that many times she thought about quitting the program, but her husband, Jim, “kept pushing me on. When I finally got to the end, it was such a relief – unbelievable.”

She said it has provided her with “immense knowledge” regarding the tools and equipment. It’s helped “me to do my job a lot better.”

Asked what she would say to younger people about a manufacturing career, Cappon said, “It’s definitely something that people need to get into. If a person my age can learn these kinds of things, there is no reason that a person coming out of school can’t learn it. It takes a lot of dedication and hard work. You have to be able to go out on a limb on your own, too, to try things to see if it’ll work, but there’s a huge opening in this area and we just keep getting busier, and busier and busier, so there’s an opening there for anybody who would want to do it.”



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Cappon began working at SUPERB in 2005, sewing American flags in what has become the Stitches USA division. Since then, she has worked in assembly operations and welding. Currently, she operates a high-speed stamping machine to manufacture components used in appliances and furnaces.

“Basically, when I started as a press operator, I was just a button pusher,” she said.

What appealed to her about learning more? “The mystique, I think. You always hear the presses running. You hear the noise, you hear everything about it, but what does it really do? I remember the first day that they put me on one, I went ‘Oh my goodness, you mean that is actually what I’m going to do?”

Since then, “when you actually sit down and look at it, and take one apart, it’s amazing what it looks like inside.”

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