



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

By Brian Bondus | The Springfield News Sun

SPRINGFIELD — Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel visited Springfield Tuesday to promote a new program, Ohio Strong, that recognizes blue collar workers instead of CEO's and executives of companies.

"I think a four-year degree is one way to be successful, but you can also have a very high quality of life, an enjoyable life, a fun, high-paying job working in manufacturing and skilled trades," Mandel said.

He visited Ohio Stamping and Machine in Springfield and awarded six employees — Akil Ragland, Craig Cattell, Dale Wells, Lenny Holbrook, Randy Littler and Tod Kuss — for their work on a project that saves the company more than \$100,000 a year.

The team developed new technology that cuts down the production time on the company's largest machine by 300 hours a year, said Jeffrey Powell, OSMI's director of development.

Mandel said as baby boomers continue to retire, the state's need for more skilled trade workers in the economy is growing. He said there is a manufacturer in Youngstown that has to turn down orders because it does not have the craftsmen to do the work.

Mandel said his vision is to get shop class back into more high schools.

Littler, an OSMI engineer, said he sees the problem right here in Springfield.

"Finding young people that want to start out in our field is very problematic for our growth," he said.

Littler said most of the OSMI's machines are now computerized, and that manufacturing jobs today are very different compared to what most people think when they envision a career in the industry.

"There is always going to be a need for product, and with the way technology is today and the younger people being more accepting of the technology, it is perfect for them," Littler said.

Ragland is a prime example of starting a career in manufacturing at a young age. After high school, he started at OSMI at the age of 19. Ragland has now worked for the company for 13 years and says he has had many opportunities to grow.

After starting at around \$20,000 a year, Ragland said he now makes between \$45,000 and \$50,000 a year.

"The sooner you do it the sooner you can advance," he said. "I know a lot of people don't like getting dirty and they want an office job 9 to 5, but that's not for everybody."



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Mandel is traveling the state promoting the viability of skilled trade jobs for students graduating from high school, also stopping in Dayton Tuesday.

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