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## Campaign hopes to attract young adults

By JOHN LINDENBERGER , The North Platte Telegraph

Manufacturing output is at an all time high, but so is the need for skilled workers. To attract young adults into manufacturing a new statewide campaign is being launched called "Dream It, Do It."

Developed by the National Association of Manufacturers and its research and education arm, The Manufacturing Institute, kick-off events for the campaign were held in North Platte and Scottsbluff on Thursday.

Local business representatives, educators and civic leaders gathered at North Platte Community College Thursday for the official launch. Organizers said Nebraska is the first to do a statewide launch for the campaign.

The campaign has already started in Kansas City, Mo., Northeast Ohio, Southwest Virginia and Washington. At least 10 other regions or states are in the planning stages for their launch dates.

"And this is just the start," said Tony Raimondo, chairman and CEO of Behlen Mfg. Co. and chairman of the Nebraska "Dream It, Do It" campaign.

Raimondo said the message they are trying to send is much like the message delivered by advertisers in the 1940s with Rosy the Riveter. That message was what's good for industry is good for the family.

"There was a crisis at that time, and we at the N.A.M. see a real crisis developing," Raimondo said.

He noted communities are struggling to compete on a national and international level because about 70 percent of students at colleges don't graduate and those who do are graduating with a low level of skills.

"We've got to help young adults understand that if they follow careers with skills they will have employment opportunities," R said. He added manufacturing output is at an all time high while employees are scarce.

Not only is there a shortage of employees in the manufacturing industry, but there is also a perception among parents and educators that manufacturing careers are somehow second-class jobs.

In addition to a negative stereotype, a recent study revealed that both education and public policy were not aligned with the needs of the manufacturing industry, according to Phyllis Eisen of The Manufacturing Institute. She added this skills gap analysis also indicated that 80 percent of those surveyed could not find the skilled labor needed to move the industry forward and be competitive.

While the "Dream It, Do It" campaign is a national campaign, Eisen said it is driven primarily on the local level. It is up to the local community, educators, civic leaders and others to come together to help make this work.

"We need you because as a representative of the manufacturing industry, we are scared that we will not have the talent pool that we need to stay competitive," Eisen said.

In those areas that have launched the "Dream It, Do It" campaign, there has already been some success. Eisen said in one year she saw a 35-percent increase in the number of people enrolled in manufacturing-related programs.

"It's as if we took the veils off of this industry and brought some clarity to what it looked like," Eisen said.

Raimondo said local community leaders are at the heart of the potential success of this program, and he feels a tremendous obligation to reach out not only to young people but also to businesses.

"We think business has been on the sidelines too long," Raimondo said.

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For more information about the "Dream It, Do It" campaign and the career opportunities available in the manufacturing industry, visit the official campaign website at [www.dreamit-doit.com](http://www.dreamit-doit.com).



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