



# MANUFACTURING MATTERS

A newsletter of The Southwest Virginia Alliance for Manufacturing

## In This Issue:

- Women in Manufacturing Symposium
- Outstanding Women in Manufacturing Awards
- Opportunities in Manufacturing
- Manufacturing Tours
- SVAM Member Careers Promotion
- Training Opportunities
- Member Listing

## Women in Manufacturing Symposium



The Southwest Virginia Alliance for Manufacturing successfully hosted its annual Women in Manufacturing Symposium on March 8, 2024. This key event celebrated Women's History Month and International Women's Day, highlighting the significant contributions, value, and future of women in the manufacturing sector.

The 2024 Symposium aimed to celebrate and recognize women's achievements in manufacturing in Southwest Virginia while promoting the wealth of career opportunities available within the industry. This aligns with SVAM's ongoing mission to shift perceptions about manufacturing careers and increase the number of individuals pursuing professions in this vital sector.

This year's event featured a keynote speech by Karin Lund, acclaimed author of *Women In Steel*, *Women Of Steel: Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow*, and President and CEO of G-Power Global Enterprises. Lund's address set an empowering tone for the day, inspiring attendees with insights into the resilience and innovation of women in the manufacturing landscape.

A highlight of the symposium was the panel discussion, featuring women at various levels of careers in manufacturing, including Hope Jennings, Lean Specialist at Coperion; Shelly Wiseman, Materials Manager at Strongwell; Samantha Goldman, Multi-Purpose Operator at Somic America, Inc.; and Christa Glassburn, Chief Operating Officer at PBE Group. These women shared their journeys within the manufacturing sector, offering valuable perspectives on career paths, opportunities, and the unique qualities that enable women to excel in this field.

The event also served as a platform to honor the 2024 winners of the "Outstanding Women in Manufacturing Award" across various categories. More details can be found on page 2.

*"The annual SVAM Women in Manufacturing Symposium celebrates the contribution of women in manufacturing in SW Virginia. As a winner of the 2023 Outstanding Women in Manufacturing Award, who is not at the corporate level, I feel that is very valuable. From the production floor workers to top officials, SVAM shows the levels of hard work and dedication that it takes to make manufacturing a true success."*

*-Bobbi Marin, Quality Data Specialist, Somic America, Inc.*



**Mission Statement:** Supporting the sustainment and advancement of manufacturing in Southwest Virginia through regional collaborations, improving the image of manufacturing, and closing the skills gap.

## SVAM Goals

**Goal 1:** Supporting manufacturing and its careers as part of an educational and economic development initiative.

**Goal 2:** Increasing the number of individuals who pursue manufacturing-based careers.

**Goal 3:** Aligning educational and workforce training resources with the most pressing demands of area industry.

## Outstanding Women in Manufacturing Awards

Each year, SVAM accepts nominations from manufacturing companies across the region for its Outstanding Woman in Manufacturing Award. A panel of judges reviews and scores each nomination based on the categories of Company and Peer Impact. Through the Outstanding Women in Manufacturing program, many amazing women have been recognized for their contributions to the world of manufacturing in Southwest Virginia.

It is with great pleasure we announce the winners of this year's Outstanding Women in Manufacturing Award:

- **Management Category:** Carrie Bowers, Process Engineering Manager, Strongwell
- **Hourly/Production Category:** Carolyn Caudill, Quality Technician III, SIG
- **Administrative Support Category:** Agnes Wright, Customer Success Administration, Hitachi Energy



**Carrie Bowers**  
Process Engineering  
Manager, Strongwell



**Carolyn Caudill**  
Quality Technician III, SIG



**Agnes Wright**  
Customer Success  
Administration, Hitachi Energy

## Opportunities in Manufacturing Presentations

High school students had a chance to learn more about manufacturing in Southwest Virginia through the Opportunities in Manufacturing program. The presentation included information about the expected salary and benefits of manufacturing jobs, the job outlook for students, and what manufacturing looks like today. This year, employees from SVAM member manufacturing companies also had the opportunity to educate students about their companies and available jobs. Presentations were given to over 750 students in Carroll, Grayson, Russell, Scott, Smyth and Washington Counties and the City of Galax.





## Manufacturing Tours

Washington County Career and Technical students recently had the opportunity to delve deeper into the industrial sector with tours of Speyside Bourbon Stave Mill and Utility Trailer in Glade Spring, VA. During the visits, students learned about the processes involved in bourbon barrel production and trailer manufacturing, gaining insights into the skills required for these industries. The experiences provided valuable educational content and highlighted potential career paths in manufacturing.



SVAM organized two tours of Real Performance Machinery for SVAM Member companies and representatives from business support organizations. Participants were briefed on RPM's revolutionary HOTT ProSaw system. Individuals from multiple organizations learned about the working environment, what RPM looks for in an ideal candidate, pay and benefits, and more.

## SVAM Member Careers Promotion

**Career Fairs:** On March 21st, SVAM participated in the Crossroads Career Fair in Galax, VA. The event was split into two informative sessions: in the morning, SVAM engaged with high school students, discussing the field of manufacturing and the diverse career opportunities it offers. Later in the afternoon, the focus shifted to job seekers, with SVAM promoting various open positions



available at member companies. This dual approach helped educate the community on the significance of manufacturing jobs and connected potential employees with immediate employment opportunities.

**Member-Exclusive Job Openings Promotion:** Many of SVAM's member companies are actively hiring and SVAM is providing advertisements of these openings, daily, on our website and across our social media platforms. SVAM has a page on our website that compiles all openings for member companies, with links for job seekers to apply. This page gets updated every Thursday.

## Membership Benefits

### Connections:

Members are provided opportunities to connect with other manufacturers as well as vendors - providing opportunities for business improvement and business growth.

### Resources:

SVAM has saved its member companies thousands of dollars by providing them with access to resources that offset training and development costs.

### Support:

Member companies have access to a menu of benefits offered that support business growth including training, marketing, and efforts to help member companies fill job openings.

## Training Opportunities for SVAM Members:

SVAM continued to meet member training needs with ongoing training offerings this quarter. Trainings were provided at no cost to SVAM Member companies. As part of its Supervisor Training series, in partnership with Virginia Tech's Southwest Center, SVAM offered the following trainings: Communicating with Employees, Managing Difficult Conversations at Work, and How to Conduct Performance Evaluations. Per a member request, SVAM also partnered with Baker Donelson to offer a virtual Reasonable Suspicion training. There were 245 total attendees for these trainings.

## SVAM's Manufacturing Membership: 47 Companies



## SVAM Affiliate Members

AM Training Management; Appalachian Council for Innovation; Appalachian Environmental Resources; Appalachian Promise Alliance; AtWork Recruiting and Staffing; Baker Donelson; Ballard Health; Brown, Edwards & Company, L.L.P.; Dickenson County Board of Supervisors; Emory & Henry College; EMATS, Inc.; Employee Benefit Consultants; GBC Wellness Center/The Medfit Center; Genedge Alliance; Hollingsworth & Vose Company; Hungate Business Services; King University; Merrick & Company; Mountain Empire Community College; Mount Rogers Regional Partnership; New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board; Occupational Enterprises, Inc.; Old Dominion University; OpX Solutions, LLC; Radford University; SESCO Management Consultants; Smyth County Chamber of Commerce; Southwest Virginia Community College's Apex Accelerator; Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center; Southwest Virginia Workforce Development Board; The Joint Industrial Development Authority of Wythe County; The University of Virginia's College at Wise; United Way of Southwest Virginia/EO; Virginia Coalfield Economic Development Authority; Virginia Highlands Community College; Virginia Tech; Washington County Chamber; Washington County Industrial Development Authority; Wytheville Community College; Wytheville-Wythe-Bland Chamber of Commerce.

## Local Government Partners

Smyth County Board of Supervisors, Washington County Board of Supervisors, Wythe County Board of Supervisors (Affiliate), Scott County Board of Supervisors (Affiliate)



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