

Metal Flow Corporation

West Michigan Works!

22 August 2019

Metal Flow Corporation

Cultivating Our Community

Metal Flow is an innovative metal forming company with extensive value-added manufacturing technologies. Our current workforce is around 270 employees, and we hope to grow as we further develop our technical capabilities.

In October of 1978, Curtis and Marc Brown—a father-son team, opened the doors of Metal Flow Corporation in Holland, Michigan. They set out with a vision to obtain the utmost excellence in customer service, quality, honesty and community presence—all while being a strong competitor in the deep draw industry. Since the autumn of 1978, Metal Flow has successfully expanded their products to include air bag components, fuel connectors, sensors, solenoids, nut caps, and fuel rails. These products are made through the process of deep draw—a sheet metal forming process which allows for an infinite variety of complex designs. This method often requires frequent tool changes as parts are formed, folded, and pierced to customer specifications.

Due to the extensive complexities of our industry—along with the difficulties of locating skilled labor, Metal Flow reached out to *West Michigan Works!* to help reach our company goals. We aspire to support our team members, achieve beneficial growth, and help our community flourish.

The funds provided by the Going PRO training grant allowed Metal Flow to do just that. We used the funds to invigorate our on-site training courses through our annual Training Calendar. Additionally, this allowed us to introduce new courses and methods to further the knowledge of our team members. Examples of this include new courses like Basic SPC and Basic Measuring Tools, the ability for team members to cross-train in different departments, and much more. This resulted in individual and company development of highly valued technical skill sets. The Going PRO Grant also contributed to Metal Flow's Apprenticeship Program. Two of our team members were able to start their new career paths this year, as they work towards becoming DOL registered apprentices. The Going PRO fund provided financial support to pay for the entirety of one of their required courses, which in turn helped pave the road towards their individual success during their first year of training.

These two newly selected apprentices reflect the positive effects from *West Michigan Works!* One of these apprentices—Hunter Brookhouse, started working for Metal Flow straight out of high school with no set career path in mind. Hunter was placed in training courses funded by the Going PRO Grant, which allowed Metal Flow to discover his great potential. Metal Flow encouraged him to join our internal Technical Training Academy, which he soon completed, stating that he “wouldn't have learned such valuable skills without the training programs at Metal Flow”. Next, he moved on to apply for the Apprenticeship program, where he was accepted as one of our top candidates. After going through

training, Hunter voiced the most significant effect of our training programs, that they “have taught me lifelong skills that I will carry with me on and off the job for the rest of my life.”

With all the wonderful successes that we have achieved from this grant, there are also some challenges that we have faced—the biggest being capacity constraints. We aspire to keep a balance between effectiveness and efficiency. We value the stability of effectively using our time and resources while being as beneficial to our team members as possible.

Another challenge we face is the struggle between maintaining production and training our team members. Metal Flow wants to accommodate the high level of interest from our team members for our new courses while not compromising production needs. This is one of the biggest challenges that we face as a company, as we aim to have a positive correlation between our team member’s success and our corporate goals.

We at Metal Flow believe that it is critical for organizations to invest in building talent, and to help employees keep their skills as sharp as possible. Having support from *West Michigan Works!* has permitted us to act on our belief and allowed us to better meet the skill demands that are required in this industry. We are thankful for the assistance in cultivating our work community and will continue to strive towards our goals thanks to *West Michigan Works!*