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Manufacturing is on the Move in the Mountain State

Rebecca Randolph, President
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Rebecca Randolph became president of the West Virginia Manufacturers Association in November 2013. In that role, she helps to strategically shape the policy to build on West Virginia's competitive strengths to create a more positive environment for sustaining and developing manufacturing in the state.

Previously, she served as the president of Vision Shared, the state economic development organization, and was assistant vice president of development at Marshall University in Huntington, West Virginia.

Before returning to West Virginia in 2003, Ms. Randolph served as grant development and research manager and interim director of development for the YMCA of Greater Cleveland (Ohio). She also has worked for nonprofit health care organizations in both West Virginia and Ohio and as a development consultant in northeast Ohio.

Ms. Randolph earned her bachelor's degree from the West Virginia Institute of Technology.

Manufacturing in West Virginia accounts for nine percent of the total output in the state, employing 6.3 percent of the workforce. Providing nearly 50,000 jobs in West Virginia, manufacturing is a vital component of the state's economic engine. Thanks to the renaissance of manufacturing, West Virginia is prospering, with income growth well above national averages, a strong state bond rating, and manufacturing output and growth among the top five states in the nation.

West Virginia's manufacturing industry is resurgent. Annual investment in energy and manufacturing in West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Ohio, in connection with the vast Marcellus and Utica natural gas and natural gas liquids reserves being developed, is in excess of \$15 billion annually. Manufacturers, old and new, are working to expand, invest and develop the available workforce in West Virginia at a rapid rate.

The West Virginia Manufacturers Association is committed to the continued growth and development of manufacturing in West Virginia. Representing the diversity and quality of manufacturing in the state, the WVMA promotes a manufacturing-friendly environment in West Virginia. To that end, the Association recognizes education, workforce development, advocacy and the importance of a diverse manufacturing network as fundamental components of continued industry growth. The Association's strategic plan offers a path for continued improvement in all of these areas.

Successful workforce development is critical to realizing manufacturing's potential in the Mountain State in the years ahead. The WVMA and its partners are working to assure the availability of skilled workers to meet not only current and projected needs of our existing

manufacturing base, but also to fill the thousands of potential new jobs that manufacturing and the energy industry will produce in years to come. For too long, manufacturing carried a stigma as offering jobs requiring low-skill and intense labor. Automation and technology have transformed manufacturing, altering the skills needed to operate and maintain factory equipment.

Once considered "dirty jobs," many careers in manufacturing require a high degree of skill and education, and offer earning potential to match. Statistics from the Georgetown University Center on Education and Workforce indicate that by 2018, 42 percent of jobs in manufacturing will require some postsecondary education or a degree. In addition, a 2012 Manpower Group survey showed that machine operators and engineers are among the top 10 jobs that U.S. employers have trouble filling.

The WVMA and its member companies are committed to introducing today's students to tomorrow's opportunities for careers in manufacturing. The manufacturing community is successfully meeting its workforce development challenges, but additional effort is needed to assure strength in meeting future needs. Through active partnerships with West Virginia's community and technical colleges, four-year colleges and universities, and the state's public education system, manufacturers have employed more than 40,000 well-educated and highly skilled new employees in the past five years, bringing a new wave of career opportunities to families and communities around the state.

Advocacy is a key focus of the WVMA in maintaining the positive position for manufacturing growth in West Virginia. The WVMA and its members have been actively



shaping public policy in West Virginia for decades, enhancing the attractiveness of West Virginia as a place for manufacturers to do business, while building on the state's natural competitive strengths. Through an active and aggressive effort at collaboration and communication, the WVMA leads the state's effort to educate elected leaders, educators, the energy industry and others with regard to the opportunities and challenges for manufacturing. Having represented the state's manufacturing industry for nearly 100 years, the WVMA has accumulated a vast network of members and partners who work toward the common goal of strengthening the environment for manufacturing growth in West Virginia.



Outreach and communication efforts of the WVMA are reaping positive results. A recent poll demonstrates that more than 70 percent of West Virginians believe that manufacturing is a key to economic prosperity and well-being in the Mountain State. In addition, there is significant support for and interest in all the manufacturing growth initiatives of the WVMA, the West Virginia Legislature and local communities.



Moving forward, the WVMA will continue to focus on maintaining and improving West Virginia's position for manufacturing growth. Building on an abundance of energy, the state's strong economic position, and the commitment of industry and business leaders to securing economic prosperity for West Virginians for years to come, the WVMA is proud to lead efforts in education, advocacy and excellence in manufacturing. ▾

For more information about the West Virginia Manufacturers Association, call 304-342-2123 or visit the WVMA on the web at www.wvma.com.