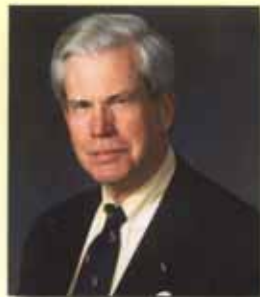


# ADVENTURES IN TECHNOLOGY:

## WORKFORCE PROGRAM HELPS SMALL MANUFACTURERS SOLVE TOUGH PROBLEMS



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**C**osts savings of nearly \$100,000 over five years is an accomplishment every manufacturer would welcome.

McClarin Plastics of Hanover recently found a way to realize such savings by changing how it disposes of excess fiberglass resin used on one of its production lines.

Among the many products it makes are the orange fiberglass engine housings JLG Industries, Inc., mounts on the aerial work-platforms made at its Shippensburg plant south of Hanover. Until recently, McClarin used cardboard sheets to capture the resin wastes or "chop" emitted during the fiberglass fabrication process, spending nearly \$33,000 on cardboard annually. In addition, the sheets had to be disposed of in an environmentally safe way, entailing additional material handling-related costs.

A team was put together to tackle the problem. And soon a solution and projected cost savings emerged which literally "floored" McClarin's management: Instead of using cardboard sheets, the team suggested, why

not simply lay down a polyethylene or epoxy-based protective coating that would both protect the floor of the fiberglass work area and make "policing" of the excess resin a lot easier and less time consuming?

Overheads would be reduced as would costs of materials – big time. McClarin Plastics was highly pleased with the idea and expects to adopt it soon. And so, too, are the nine South West High School students who thought of it!

The McClarin Plastics experience is just one example of how employers are benefiting from Adventures in Technology (AIT), an IRCN initiative designed to tap the brains and creativity of the state's high school students to solve problems and come up with new ways of doing things. AIT also awakens students' interests in some of the many exciting career options Pennsylvania's evolving economy can offer.

The South West High School AIT team of sophomores, juniors and seniors mirrors the very kind of cross-functional teams pro-

gressive employers assemble from within their own organizations to resolve challenges and to come up with new product and service ideas. Research and comparative analysis, communications and presentation skills are some of the very tools manufacturers are especially in need of as they seek to boast performance and outpace the competition. Knowing that the brains and energy to use such tools might be available at the local high school could assure AIT continued employer support. As Todd Kennedy, Chairman of McClarin Plastics remarked after the students presented their project last December, "We're ready for another!"

Adventures in Technology and the connections it fosters demonstrates how much employers seeking to excel value innovative thinkers and problem solvers, as well as the reliance such employers place on teamwork and collaboration. For students seeking to excel themselves, and who we hope decide to stay in Pennsylvania, this is an important message. **p**