

COUNTY OF  
**SAN BERNARDINO**



WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD

**Media Contacts:**

Sandy Harmsen

Workforce Investment Board

909.387.9862

Jessica McLeish

909.659.6844

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD HELPS  
FILL SHORTAGE OF SKILLED WORKERS**

*Inland Empire manufacturers focus on developing a more competitive workforce*

San Bernardino, Calif. (May 2, 2011) -- Leading manufacturing companies in the Inland Empire, a top manufacturing hub, cannot find enough skilled machinists, electricians, welders or mechanics to fill positions left by an experienced but aging workforce.

In partnership with the San Bernardino County Workforce Investment Board and local educators, these companies formed the Manufacturers' Council of the Inland Empire to pool resources to train a new generation of skilled workers. The Council helps develop customized training programs funded through the Workforce Investment Act to train the local workforce with high demand skills.

California Steel Industries, one of the Inland Empire's leading manufacturing companies located near Fontana, has four job openings for electricians and four for mechanics. Human Resources Manager Rod Hoover estimates that if the company relied on recruiting efforts alone, it would take a year to fill those positions in spite of record unemployment.

"It is very difficult to find skilled craft workers. We invest in classes at local colleges and provide on-the-job mentoring and training to develop talent among our current employees, in addition to paying their wages," he said. "We are grateful that the County of San Bernardino supports our effort by funding key vocational education to develop skilled employees to fill critical needs."

**-More-**

## **Inland Empire Manufacturers**

### **Page 2 of 3**

According to Hoover, who is also the 2011 Chair of the San Bernardino County Workforce Investment Board, California Steel is presently training seven mechanics, seven electricians and four machinists over a two to four-year period.

Kevin Crickenberger of Victorville, CA is a certified Class B Electrician at California Steel and is being groomed to become a certified Class A Electrician and a specialist in instrumentation. Four years ago, Kevin navigated his way through the San Bernardino County Workforce Investment Board's job training program at Chaffey College.

"Before I came to CSI, I'd get a job, work really hard and then they'd lay me off," Crickenberger said. "When I read about the San Bernardino County Workforce Investment Board's job training programs through Chaffey College, I applied and it changed the course of my life."

Wallace Brithinee, co-owner of Brithinee Electric feels that fewer younger people are entering trades because they would rather learn desktop computer skills or professions that are not hands-on. Brithinee Electric specializes in building and maintaining motors and industrial generators as well as motor control centers. Brithinee's youngest employee is 32 years old and his average employee has a 20-year record with the company.

"Our trade may not seem glamorous, but our industry is here to stay and offers a long-term career with a steady paycheck," he said.

Pearl Virgen, Human Resources Manager at Cott Beverages, and Chair of the Manufacturers' Council, agrees and points out the loss of auto and woodshop classes in high school.

"The younger generation of workers is not getting the basic foundational skills that can prepare them to become skilled craft workers," said Josie Gonzales, Chair and County of San Bernardino Fifth District Supervisor. "We're very grateful for On-the-Job Training programs offered by the San Bernardino County Workforce Investment Board. These programs help take entry level associates and develop them into skilled maintenance technicians and electricians."

Presently, Cott Beverage is hosting a "Vocational English as a Second Language" class at its facility, funded by the San Bernardino County Workforce Investment Board and taught by Chaffey College. The class consists of Cott associates and employees from other companies that are part of the Manufacturers' Council.

**-More-**

## **Inland Empire Manufacturers**

### **Page 3 of 3**

“We try to provide classes that will offer our associates the most skills and benefits possible,” Virgen said. “The fact that so many of our people are taking this class every Saturday for ten weeks speaks a lot about their dedication to their personal and professional growth. For us, it creates employee loyalty and morale, which is very gratifying.”

For more information, employers and job seekers can inquire through the County of San Bernardino’s Employment Resource Centers at (800) 451-JOBS or <http://www.sbcountyadvantage.com/Career-Centers.aspx>.

### **About the Workforce Investment Board of San Bernardino County**

The Workforce Investment Board of San Bernardino County is comprised of private business representatives and public partners appointed by the County Board of Supervisors. The Board strives to strengthen the skills of the County’s workforce through partnerships with business, education and community-based organizations. The County of San Bernardino Board of Supervisors is committed to providing county resources which generate jobs and investment.

The Workforce Investment Board, through the County of San Bernardino Economic Development Agency and Workforce Development Department, operates the County of San Bernardino Employment Resource Centers (ERCs) and Business Resource Centers (BRCs). The ERCs provide individuals with job training, placement and the tools to strengthen their skills to achieve a higher quality of life, and the BRCs support and provide services to the County’s businesses including employee recruitment.

###