

Tool and die company molds training program

By CRAIG PIECHURA

A tool and die shop isn't the final resting ground for old wrenches.

It's a place where dies are formed to mold sheet metal into components that go into car hoods or appliances. It's a place where precision tools are built to make industrial production more efficient.

For 15 apprentices at Arrowsmith Corp., the Southfield tool and die shop is their key to a career in the skilled trades. Unlike the large number of unemployed auto workers or small shop workers, you'll find few unemployed tool and die makers. The last layoff at Arrowsmith was five years ago.

"If I, today, put an ad in the paper asking for a tool and die maker, I'd find there's just nobody to hire," says Donald Greenbury of Farmington Hills, president of the firm.

The lack of skilled workers in the field is nothing new, say company officials.

Since 1952, Arrowsmith Corp. has paid for the schooling of nearly 100 apprentices sent to school first at Henry Ford Community College and now Schoolcraft College in Livonia, to become tool and die makers, machinists or machine tool builders.

Presently, there are 15 apprentices in a work force of 75 employees, balancing work at the non-union shop with four years of part-time college studies.

Arrowsmith pays all tuition costs if the apprentices pass courses the first time they take it. If a course must be repeated, the apprentice must pay.

APPRENTICES must work 8,000 hours in the plant over a four-year period during which time they are paid 55 percent of a tool and die journeyman's rate. At Arrowsmith, that works out to be \$6.72 an hour starting pay for an apprentice.

Apprentices are under no obligation to continue working at Arrowsmith once their schooling is completed but many of them do stay.

Upon receiving certificate from the U.S. Department of Labor in the skilled trades, a die maker makes just under \$10 an hour at average, according to 1979 national statistics released by the National Tooling and Machining Association.

"It's like a college degree," Greenbury says. "With that certificate, a tool and die maker can go to any shop in the United States or, for that matter, the world and work as a tool and die maker."

One of the biggest boosters of the apprenticeship program is its coordinator, Bernie Schwab, who started at Arrowsmith almost 10 years ago as an apprentice. Schwab also assists Schoolcraft instructors in drawing up curriculum that directly relates to the job.

Schwab went to Houston recently with Ken Schultz, Schoolcraft College's related instruction coordinator, to observe a contest for tool and die apprentices. Next year, Arrowsmith hopes to send one of its top student apprentices to compete.

Lytle Smith, 31, of Union Lake, started his apprenticeship at Arrowsmith in 1966 through the Farmington High co-op program.

Today, he's a die leader at the plant supervising the work of three die makers. On Thursday, he was working on a hydraulic tool that will be used in the production of a Rolls Royce fan engine.

John Potts, 21, of Farmington Hills has one year left to complete in the apprenticeship program. Potts heard about the program from a friend and figures the skills he's learning are invaluable.

"IF YOU do a good job you get satisfaction from it," Potts said. "Here, I get to use my hands and get to use my mind."

One of the most determined apprentices is Kermitine "Tina" Guinn, 26, of Detroit. She is black, still a rarity in the skilled trades, and the first woman apprentice at Arrowsmith.

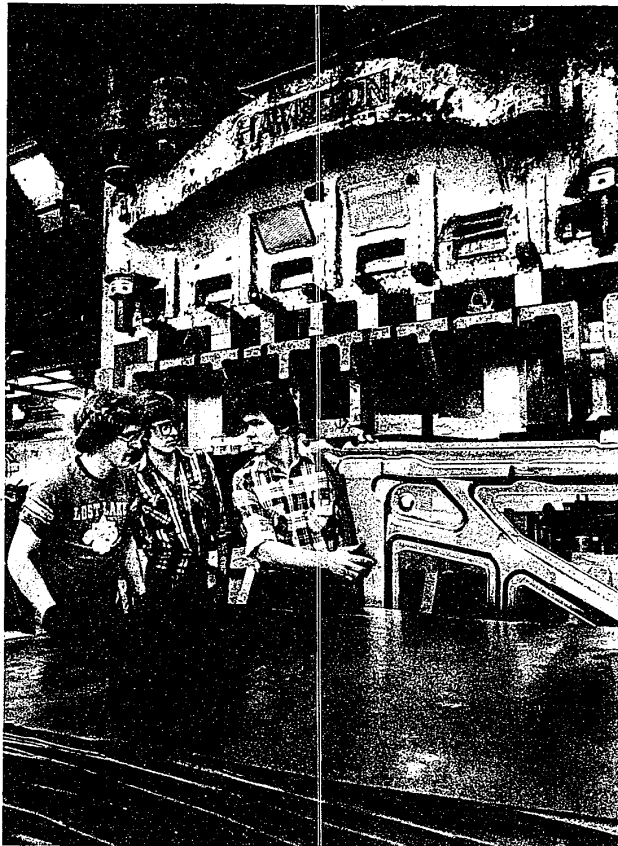
Ms. Guinn said she was referred to Arrowsmith by a local trade school.

Some people might make derogatory remarks about a woman entering the predominantly-male machine shop trade, Ms. Guinn acknowledges "but if I wasn't trying this, they'd still be talking about something else."

Most people, including her employer and co-workers, Ms. Guinn says, offer encouragement.

"They say it's good you're trying to make it on your own."

Her boss, Greenbury, says the jobs are out there if the determination is in there, pointing to his chest.



Dan Timpe (left) and Mark Kogelschatz (center) talk with apprentice coordinator Bernard Schwab. They are overshadowed by a giant metal press. The

machine stamps inner hood structures from sheets of metal.



Carl Rich (left) explains how a jig bore works to female apprentice at Arrowsmith. (Staff photos by Mindy Saunders)

inside angles/Louise Okrutsky

THE FARMINGTON AREA Jaycees are collecting eyeglasses for underprivileged persons in the United States and the Third World. The glasses will be given to doctors who will use them to fill prescriptions. The drive continues until March 24 at the following drop-off sites: from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday at the Farmington Vision Clinic, Classic Eyewear, one-quarter of a block west of Orchard Lake Road on Ten Mile; from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m., Monday through Friday and from noon to 5 p.m. on weekends at Sanderson Real Estate Network, one-half mile west of Orchard Lake Road on Grand River; from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday at T&L Printing, World Wide T.V. Center, west of Farmington Road on Grand River. That old pair of glasses you don't use anymore will find more use through the drive than if they languished in a drawer. It's almost springtime, so get a head start on your cleaning by clearing out the eyeglasses which you never use and don't need.

A BIG IA congratulations to Bill Cook of Bill Cook Buick in Farmington for being the recipient of the VFW's Patriotic Citizen Award. Cook flies not one, not two but 12 (count 'em) U.S. flags around his dealership. For that display, VFW 2269 thought it was fitting he should be honored. Here's an appropriate IA salute: ★★★★★★★★
(one star for every flag.)

OK, EVERYONE get into the key of C. Hummmmm. Sing now. Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to... (In case you're wondering, we're singing to the Farmington Hills Historical Commission which officially began on March 10, 1975.)

ANOTHER MISSING Brittany Spaniel has come to IA's attention. Marty Graff lost his dog Jan. 18. The 2 1/2-year-old white Brittany with brown spots answers to Maggie. The dog was last seen on Howard north of Eleven Mile near Drake and Halsted. She was wearing a black leather collar and a leather training collar (a choke) without a name tag. If the dog's been taken for hunting, the person or persons responsible ought to be aware that Maggie wasn't trained to be a hunting dog. If she does, it's all instinct. If anybody knows of Maggie's whereabouts, give IA a call at 477-5450.

THE FARMINGTON Hills Beautification Commission will meet at 8 p.m., March 19 in the Hills City Council chambers, 31565 Eleven Mile.

COOKS WHO tried the recipe for banana tea cake which appeared in the March 3 edition of the Observer's food section should be advised that the cake requires one cup of milk. The amount wasn't specified in the recipe.

FARMINGTON City Council watcher Nancy Leonard was hot on the trail of some missing maple trees last week.

The trees were located on the east side of Warner near the First Methodist Church. No one on the City Council had the vaguest notion of where, oh, where has the large tree gone. During the ensuing discussion over the missing maples, Ms. Leonard, Farmington's council watcher stalwart, nodded in the direction of newly sworn Public Safety Director Bob Seifert and said, "You'll get used to me." Ralph Yoder, councilmember and sometime pundit, quickly added, "I've never gotten used to you, Nancy."

By the way, the missing maples were discovered to have been chopped down by Detroit Edison's crews with the permission of the First Methodist Church congregation, which owned the trees.

EDISON crews, possibly in honor of George Washington's birthday, have gone through some neighborhoods in Farmington looking for trees which might fall down and take utility lines with them. Tree watcher Nancy Leonard reports that the crews were advising her that her favorite backyard tree might be hazardous to the continuing health and safety of an Edison line. It could fall down someday, they advised. "I could die tomorrow, too," sniffed Ms. Leonard who axed the entire idea.

REMEMBER last December when Angles told the story of the little girl who asked the owner of the Art Alcove to whistle "Jingle Bells." The fledgling star then sang the song while the obliging grownup whistled in the background. Who was that singing sweetheart? Rebecca Graff, 5, of Farmington Hills was the one who sang herself into the hearts of Art Alcove customers. ♡♡♡♡♡♡

THOSE INDUSTRIOUS members of the Farmington Hills Historical Commission are planning to issue picture postcards of old-time FH in time for visiting Republicans to send home come convention week next summer. The card projected to be the Republican favorite? A picture of Farmington's own Governor Fred Warner, who was a staunch member of the party.

BRODHEAD Farmington Hills VFW post 2269 at 23414 Orchard Lake Road is sponsoring a St. Patrick's Day dinner dance from 7:30 p.m., March 15. Dancing to music by the Holidays begins at 9 p.m. Donation per person is \$7.50. For further information give the post at call at 474-8180. (Ah, begona)

REMEMBER DROP IA a line at 23352 Farmington Road, Farmington, 48024.

Set for spring nights:
Gilligan and O'Malley's
sherbet-shaded
gown and wrap robe

The cool freshness of an ice-cream parlour parfait: it's here in an after-dark duo that blends its elegance with ease. Made of ultra-touchable rayon/ polyester, harlequin printed in soft pastel peach, pink and white. Slim-strapped gown with smocked yoke, \$19. Matching wrap robe with trapunto quilting, \$39. Both also in short versions: gown, \$17; robe, \$32. Find them in New Reflections Intimate Apparel, all Hudson's stores.

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