

Burbank Leader

Local companies set to work with giants

Verdugo Jobs Center helps two firms get a chance at partnerships with Boeing, Lockheed.

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Two local businesses with deep ties to the military and aviation sectors recently got huge lifts from a federally funded training program.

Burbank's Centerpoint Manufacturing and Glendale's Accurate Dial & Nameplate are poised to pick up work from some of the largest companies in the nation thanks to months-long improvement efforts, a financial stake from the Verdugo Jobs Center and the expertise of the nonprofit California Manufacturing Technology Consulting.

Using federal stimulus funds, the job center tapped the nonprofit to train staff and provide marketing advice, helping Centerpoint and Accurate Dial to get the certification needed to serve as contractors for Boeing, Lockheed Martin and other firms that hold lucrative military contracts.

Don Nakamoto, a labor force analyst for the Verdugo Jobs Center, said his agency spent about \$165,000 to help 18 manufacturing companies — ranging from machine shops to bakeries — through the program, saving 170 jobs while adding about 24 new workers to local payrolls.

“In this environment it has been difficult to save jobs or create new jobs, but by identifying turnaround projects, we've been able to do pretty good work for the community,” Nakamoto said.

A few blocks from the Bob Hope Airport, Centerpoint Manufacturing Co. Inc. is run by brothers Andy, Johnny and Tony Rottuno, third-generation owners.

The 45-employee firm manufactures airplane landing gear, as well as parts for oil and gas drilling operations. Like other companies whose ultimate consumer is often the federal government, Centerpoint needs to meet an aerospace industry quality management standard known as AS 9100 to get steady work.

AS 9100 sets the bar for how companies manufacture products, design their operations and test and inspect their work. But it can be a challenge for small firms to meet since the rules are written by the industry's major players and trade groups.

Johnny Rotunno said Centerpoint had been striving to meet the standard for a decade before the Verdugo Jobs Center program came along last year. When California Manufacturing Technology Consulting notified the Rottunos that stimulus money could absorb some of the cost, they were in. The company was certified in December.

“All of our customers are demanding that standard,” Johnny Rotunno. said.

His brother, Tony, said the firm has picked up one job to build the prototype of a new piece of equipment, and he believes more are on the way.



Roy Adams, in quality control, creates a mold of a part so he can measure how precise a part was machined at Centerpoint Manufacturing Company, Inc, in Burbank on April 26, 2011. (Tim Berger/Staff Photographer)

“It’s just like a restaurant,” he said. “The better grade you get, the better clientele you are going to get.”

Accurate Dial is a 21-employee firm that makes everything from cockpit displays on bombers to the ID plates on fire extinguishers.

Quality Manager Erin Dyer said hitting AS 9100 specs was “over our head; we just couldn’t do it.”

The company plans to celebrate its certification with a May 19 visit from Rep. Adam Schiff (D-Burbank). More importantly, it is now in solid standing with major manufacturing firms.

“By bringing our operating manual in compliance with aerospace industry specifications, we were able to retain quoting opportunities with Lockheed Martin and return [to working] with Northrop Grumman,” Dyer said.

Now that the companies have done what’s necessary to survive lean times, Nakamoto said he expects to see the investments pay off.

“Across most parts of the manufacturing sector, they are seeing a pretty significant pickup in activity,” he said. “We expect things are going to start turning around in hiring as well.”