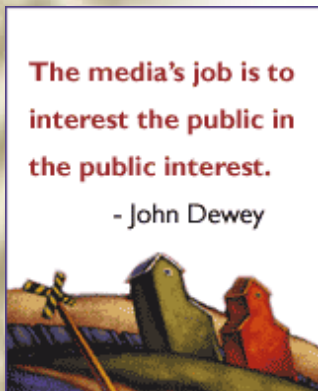




Home » March 2009

New Study: OR Ignores 'Mid-Skill' Jobs, Training

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Portland, OR - Not everyone in Oregon needs a college degree to get a good job and blue-collar jobs are even back in fashion. That's the finding of the *Oregon Workforce Alliance* in its new report, *Skills2Compete*, which says just over half of all jobs in the state are "middle-skill" jobs – for people with a high school diploma and some additional training. The report cites hands-on, well-paid career fields - healthcare, law enforcement, green jobs and more - but says Oregon is not doing enough to encourage technical education and training for its future workforce. Greater investment is needed in "middle-skill" job training as an alternative to four-year college degrees, according to the report.

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Gary Gaussoin runs Silver Eagle Manufacturing in Portland, making specialized parts for trucks and the military. He says working in the trades has fallen out of favor in recent years, in the rush to get advanced degrees – and that can make it difficult for companies like his to find employees.

"One size does not fit all. If we just want to focus on engineers, math, scientists, writing – not everybody's wired to do that. And so, we need to have opportunities to help identify those other gifts, and help nurture them."

The report describes a growing mismatch between the skills needed by employers, and those being taught to future workers. Gaussoin admits companies like his could also be doing more to attract people to different types of careers.

"I think we, as industry, need to re-institute bringing people through the factory and seeing the cool things we do – so that those people that could be interested in that, it starts to light that spark."

In the next ten years, 340,000 skilled-labor positions will open up in the state - and the report says current training isn't keeping up with the demand. It says apprenticeships, trade schools and community colleges are just as important as universities in providing learning opportunities after high school, and they should get more of the attention and investment dollars as Oregon prepares for its future workforce needs.

Read the report online at www.Skills2Compete.org/getlinkedoregon.