



1964 Prairie Dell Road, Union, MO 63084  
(636) 584-6500 - [www.EastCentral.edu](http://www.EastCentral.edu)

**CONTACT:** Gregg Jones, Director of Communications & Marketing  
Office: 636-584-6507  
Mobile: 816-529-8095  
[gregg.jones@eastcentral.edu](mailto:gregg.jones@eastcentral.edu)

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## **ECC's CWD Apprenticeship Program — Empowers Employee and Industry Growth**

Robert Laws' successful completion of the Industrial Maintenance Technician apprenticeship through the East Central College Center for Workforce Development (CWD) is a testament to the value of workforce development and education collaboration.

Laws, Union, a dedicated employee at Silgan Plastics in Union, provides a prime example of how the CWD continually offers opportunities for local employees to enhance their skills, advance their careers, and contribute to industry growth.

The Industrial Maintenance Technician apprenticeship is offered through the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) apprenticeship program, coordinated and instructed by ECC's CWD.

At 40 years old, Laws, who has been with Silgan Plastics for seven years, emphasizes the apprenticeship's importance in advancing his career and deepening his understanding of industrial processes. He strongly encourages others with similar opportunities to seize them.

"I would highly encourage this program to anyone who wants to move forward in a position, or who wants to better understand how things around industry function," he said. "The apprenticeship has assisted me in my problem-solving skills when dealing with various types of equipment."

Laws explained that the apprenticeship was offered through Silgan at a time when he was looking to continue his education.

"It just so happened that the timing was right, and the opportunity was available in a discipline that interested me," he commented.

"While taking classes and working in the maintenance department, I was able to apply the knowledge I gained to real-life situations," Laws added. "Having both in-class learning and on-the-job training made it much easier to solve and understand issues we encounter in our industry on a daily basis."

### **Industry Benefits**

Laws is the first of five employees at Silgan to complete the apprenticeship. Jeanie Ray, Human Resource Manager at Silgan, emphasized that employees enrolled in the program exhibit higher competence and confidence after starting.

"The most significant benefit we see is faster progress toward becoming qualified mechanics," she said. "The employees are also more engaged, display a great attitude, and are unafraid to tackle tasks. They have a positive attitude toward learning new skills and are better team players."

Ray further noted that any industry offering Department of Labor registered apprenticeships to its employees will benefit from this ECC CWD Apprenticeship Program.

"We would recommend any manufacturer to utilize the program," she added. "The benefits to us have been well worth the effort."

### **Apprenticeship Participation**

According to Laws, beginning the Industrial Maintenance Technician apprenticeship through the CWD was seamless.

"It was incredibly easy to access due to the support provided by Silgan and East Central College," he stated.

Ray added that Silgan cooperated with any employee interested in participating in the apprenticeship.

"We allowed employees to make their own decisions regarding program participation," she noted. "If they chose to do it, we adjusted their work schedule to ensure they could attend the program without any penalty."

## **CWD Apprenticeships**

CWD apprenticeship programs are more than a catalyst for improved productivity. They also boost the bottom line for companies, all while offering opportunities for tax credits and employee benefits. Currently, ECC offers DOL registered apprenticeship programs in various technical occupations, including Industrial Engineering Technology, Welding, Precision Machining, and Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning.

Melissa Richards, the ECC CWD Apprenticeship and Business Training Coordinator, highlighted the reach of DOL-registered apprenticeship programs, which span over 1,000 occupations and continue to grow. These apprenticeships are accessible to both union and non-union organizations.

“We have been strong with technical apprenticeships for over five years, and now we are working to register more apprenticeship occupations in the areas of health care and information technology,” she said.

The CWD's is at the forefront of creating industry-leading and adaptable training solutions to meet both national and local needs. It's important to note that for every \$1 invested in an apprenticeship, employers can expect approximately \$1.50 in return on investment, Richards added.

For more information about apprenticeship programs, contact the ECC CWD at [Training@eastcentral.edu](mailto:Training@eastcentral.edu) or 636-649-5800.

### **Cutline:**

**Robert Laws, right, with Silgan Plastics in Union, completed a U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Industrial Maintenance Technician apprenticeship program. The apprenticeship is coordinated and instructed by East Central College's Center for Workforce Development.**

**Laws is pictured with Melissa Richards, the ECC CWD Apprenticeship and Business Training Coordinator.**