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Funding Education

AAMA scholarship program paves the way for more Alabama students to work in automotive careers.

BY NANCY MANN JACKSON



The Alabama Automotive Manufacturers Association (AAMA) does more than provide a forum for interaction among automotive companies in Alabama. The organization also strives to prepare an educated workforce to fulfill the needs of the growing Alabama automotive manufacturing industry. Through its Manufacturing Scholarship program, AAMA has awarded 218 scholarships over the past five years to Alabama students interested in pursuing careers in the state's automotive manufacturing industry.

"We have so many original equipment manufacturers (OEM) around us, such as Honda, Mercedes and Toyota, and then we have around 300 suppliers that support the OEMs," says Beverly Hilderbrand, director of the Consortium for Alabama Regional Center for Automotive Manufacturing (CARCAM), a group of 11 community and technical colleges offering training in automotive manufacturing. Almost all recipients of the AAMA scholarships are students at CARCAM colleges. "The good news is that these scholarships are available and that AAMA is willing to help supply a pipeline of educated workers who will be available to staff the expansion of the industry in our state."

So far, students who have received the AAMA scholarships have found success upon entering the Alabama job market, Hilderbrand says. Last year, twin brothers Matthew and Mark Brown graduated with degrees in automotive manufacturing technology from Central Alabama Community College in Alexander City. Both were AAMA scholarship recipients, and both landed jobs at SL Alabama in Alexander City, which produces transmission shift levers and lighting for the Hyundai automotive plant in Montgomery. Other graduates of the scholarship program have secured employment at Honda, Toyota and other automotive plants around the state.

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-Beverly Hilderbrand**

Earlier this year, three students were honored with renewal scholarships, which means they will be able to complete a second year of automotive training with help from the AAMA Scholarship program. These students, Dalton Greer, an industrial maintenance student at H. Councill Trenholm State Technical College, and John Blackburn and Brandon Haley, both majoring in automotive manufacturing technology at Central Alabama Community College, were recognized at AAMA's August meeting to celebrate the organization's 10th anniversary. The meeting was held at Mercedes-Benz in Vance, with approximately 300 guests in attendance, including representatives from state agencies, manufacturers in the automotive businesses in Alabama and support companies.

To qualify for an AAMA scholarship, a student must be a resident of Alabama with an interest in pursuing an education in automotive manufacturing or related career fields, such as welding or electrical engineering, Hilderbrand says. Students must also earn a minimum grade point average of 2.5, and a 3.0 in their major subjects. "It is a very selective process," Hilderbrand says.

According to AAMA, the organization's manufacturing scholarships are intended to encourage Alabama students to pursue careers in manufacturing sectors. Scholarship selection priority is given to students who have demonstrated an interest in a career in automotive manufacturing or automotive manufacturing maintenance. The scholarships support individuals pursuing a career/technical education certificate or associate degree in the Alabama College System in preparation for a career in the automotive manufacturing industry.

To apply for an AAMA scholarship, students must contact a CARCAM college for materials. Those colleges and their contact information are listed on the CARCAM website, www.carcam.org.

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