



Story produced by:



Spencer JAC PRODUCTS, Napoleon, Ohio

From Correctional Center to Career: How One Man is Rebuilding His Life Through Manufacturing

For Spencer (*last name omitted for his privacy*), finding a job wasn't just difficult – it felt nearly impossible. After serving time and struggling with an inconsistent work history, he knew most employers would see only the gaps in his past.

But in Northwest Ohio, something different was happening. A partnership among OMA-Endorsed Industry Sector Partnership Northwest Ohio Manufacturing Association (NOMA), Northwest Community Corrections Center, Penta Aspire and Cherry Street Mission was offering more than hope. It was offering *tools*, both literal and metaphorical, to build a life in today's manufacturing industry.

That's how Spencer discovered WorkAdvance, a hands-on, high-impact career readiness program funded in part by the EDA's Good Jobs Challenge and backed by the OMA and its endorsed ISP network.

"I'll be honest – I joined for the gas card and work boots," Spencer laughs. *"But then I saw what it could really do for me."*

Not Just Training ... Transformation

With resume help, career coaching and exposure to real job opportunities, Spencer began to feel something unfamiliar: stability.

"They didn't just give me a list of job openings. They gave me tools I didn't even know I needed; and connections to people who believed in me," he said.

Upon completing the bootcamp-style training, Spencer landed a job with JAC Products in Napoleon, Ohio.

Today, he works as a machine operator and says it's the first time he's had a job that feels like a career.

"I'm pushing myself to do the right thing – even when it's hard," he says. *"Now I know safety protocols. I understand operations. And I see how this role can grow into something bigger."*

Manufacturing a New Path Forward

Spencer's story is a powerful example of how Ohio manufacturers are leveraging creative ways to address talent gaps and redefine what workforce readiness looks like.

"Programs like WorkAdvance don't just help people find jobs," says Sara Swisher, Vice President Talent & Workforce, Toledo Regional Chamber of Commerce.

"They help manufacturers find motivated, loyal and trainable talent that just needs a chance."

Spencer now dreams about retirement, travel and financial freedom – things he once thought were out of reach.

"I can see myself sitting beachside or mountainside, not worrying about money," he says. *"That future doesn't seem so far away anymore."*

Workforce
Ecosystem
Players



Employer



Industry Sector Partnership



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Learn more. Earn more.

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CBO



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