



Zoe Smith | Upholsterer
Gasser Chair



Success Story

STORY PRODUCED BY:



Fast-track to success: WorkAdvance launches local woman's manufacturing career

Finding a career that offered stability and growth felt like an uphill battle for Zoe Smith.

Since graduating from Struthers in 2020, she worked various jobs, but each one left her feeling like there was little room for advancement. Zoe wanted something that would allow her to build a future.

"I knew I wanted to go into manufacturing, but I didn't know how to get my foot in the door without schooling," Zoe said.

It was through her mom's friend that she learned about the **WorkAdvance** program, which is designed to connect individuals with careers in manufacturing.

After seeing what it had to offer, she decided to take the leap.

THE POWER OF WORKADVANCE

Initially, Zoe was interested in welding and even practiced with a family friend's equipment, but she wanted to explore possibilities before committing to a specific path. WorkAdvance gave her the opportunity to do just that.

Zoe's decision to join the program paid off quickly. The training gave her hands-on, industry exposure.

Once completed, she earned the manufacturing technology: production associates-beginner credential. Aside from more skills, she gained a network of support.

"The best part was the connections, not just with the people in my class, but also the instructors, partners and employers who came in to talk about different jobs and opportunities."

FINDING OPPORTUNITY AT GASSER CHAIR

It was the WorkAdvance career coach from the **National Center for Urban Solutions (NCUS)** in Youngstown that introduced Zoe to **Gasser Chair**. The company manufactures high-quality seating products.

She got an interview, took a tour of the plant and was immediately comfortable with what she experienced.

"It felt like a family. I could see myself growing there."

And she was right. Since starting in October 2024, Zoe quickly advanced to a highly skilled upholstery position.

The role typically takes a year to reach, and Zoe was promoted after just two weeks. That success didn't go unnoticed.

"Upholstery is one of the most challenging jobs in our plant," said Tony Brown, Director of HR at Gasser Chair. "For Zoe to master it in such a short time is truly impressive."

STABILITY AND FUTURE DREAMS

Aside from career growth, Zoe has found some financial freedom. Her wages increased from \$16 to \$23 an hour within a few months.

That jump provided her with the independence and ability to explore personal interests.

"I love traveling, so I've been able to start planning more trips."

With a bright future ahead, Zoe plans to continue learning and expanding her horizons at Gasser Chair.

Welding is still on her radar, but for now she's enjoying the journey in manufacturing and the doors that WorkAdvance opened for her.

"It helped me build confidence and showed me I wasn't the only one trying to figure things out, and that made a big difference."

Workforce Ecosystem Players



Employer



Industry Sector Partnership



Training Provider



Training Provider
Career Coach



For more information
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