



# WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Governor Tony Evers / Secretary Kevin A. Carr

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Young Men at Racine Correctional Facility Present Work to Potential Employers

**Madison, Wis.** - Several southeast Wisconsin businesses sent representatives to Racine Youthful Offender Correctional Facility (RYOCF) Thursday morning, where they joined Department of Corrections (DOC) Secretary Kevin Carr and Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary-Designee Amy Pechacek to see the skills young men are learning in the institution's mobile Mechatronics Lab.

The secretaries and the employers got to view the students' final projects and see what they've learned from their Gateway Technical College instructor.

"What a tremendous collaboration," said Secretary Carr. "Two state agencies partnering with one our state's fine technical colleges to help these young men learn skills that make them more attractive to employers in the manufacturing industry."

The Mechatronics lab is the fifth mobile training lab at a DOC institution, part of a continued collaboration between DOC and DWD to improve pre-release workforce training opportunities for people in DOC care.

"This administration is committed to providing people the opportunity to learn skills that can help them be successful. These young men are learning things that will do more than help themselves and their families. Increasing the state's skilled workforce benefits all of Wisconsin," said DWD Secretary-Designee Pechacek.

"When I was in high school, I didn't think of myself as a very good student. That has changed here," said one of the young men learning in the lab, adding that he is now interested in getting his associate's degree from Gateway when his time at the correctional facility is finished.

The Mechatronics lab, a semi-trailer that can be moved between DOC institutions, was completed this year and arrived at RYOCF in June. This is the first group to use the lab. They are earning 18 college credits and a Mechatronics Technical Certificate, which they will receive in a graduation ceremony on December 14. The lab can serve up to 12 students per group, and Gateway Technical College intends to train three groups per year.

"These young men should have no problem getting a good-paying job in this field after what they've learned here," said Gateway Technical College instructor J.D. Jones, the man who has been teaching in the mobile Mechatronics Lab.

Mechatronics is a multidisciplinary field that refers to the skill sets needed in the contemporary, advanced automated manufacturing industry. The field is at the intersection of mechanics, electronics, and computing. According to Jones, jobs in the field once paid \$20-\$25 an hour, but are now often paying \$25-\$30.

In addition to the Mechatronics Lab, Secretaries Pechacek and Carr got a look at RYOCF's new Jobs Lab, another collaboration between DOC and DWD. The Job Lab allows people in DOC care at RYOCF to get a head start on their job search. They can create a Job Center of Wisconsin account, and apply and interview for jobs before they return to their community.

The DOC releases approximately 9,000 people every year, and evidence shows a steady job lowers the chances of a person returning to a DOC institution.

The Evers Administration has made a major invest in mobile training and job labs. Over the past two years, the number of mobile training labs at DOC institutions has increased from one to five. By the end of this year, there will be 10 institution-based Job Labs, plus a mobile Job Lab that can serve multiple institutions.