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Greater Lafayette young professionals honored for manufacturing, logistics talent

News reports

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INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. – Four young professionals representing Greater Lafayette were among 30 statewide standouts Conexus Indiana named to the 2022 Rising 30 cohort.

The Rising 30 program is part of Conexus Indiana's mission to "strengthen Indiana's advanced manufacturing and logistics industries and create pathways for Hoosiers to succeed in Indiana's largest industry sector," according to the announcement.

Conexus Indiana is comprised leaders in industry, education and public-sector who Indiana's competitive advantage in advanced manufacturing and logistics, according to its website.

"The advanced manufacturing and logistics industries account for more than 30 percent of Indiana's economic output and employ more than 600,000 Hoosiers," said Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb, according to a release.

"Recognizing young professionals who contribute meaningfully to Indiana's largest industry sectors is incredibly important and helps to shine a light on the many rewarding career opportunities available in advanced manufacturing and logistics. I'm thrilled to join Conexus in honoring these young professionals and eager to see how they lead the industries into the future."

Conexus Indiana provided the following snapshots of Greater Lafayette honorees:

Matthew Cooper, Supplier Quality Engineering group leader, Subaru of Indiana Automotive

"Ask yourself when you are troubleshooting an existing problem or designing a new

piece of equipment: What are we trying to achieve? How can we achieve it? How can we implement it?"

Internships and a hands-on college engineering program allowed Cooper to graduate from Western Kentucky University and immediately hit the ground running in his manufacturing career. Arriving at Subaru of Indiana Automotive in 2018,he quickly found himself as a project lead that earned him and his team first place in the 2019 Subaru of Indiana Automotive Plant Wide Kaizen Competition and 3rd place in the firm's international Kaizen competition. Cooper led quality planning and development activities for one of the Subaru of Indiana's largest projects: the transfer of transmission assembly from Japan to Indiana.

Now, Cooper leads a dynamic group of engineers that covers 90 suppliers for all Body and Chassis components.

Kelsey Huelsenbeck, COO, Antique Candle Co.

"Get into different facilities and make connections. There is such a wide variety of opportunities in the manufacturing industry, and it's a really exciting and innovative place to be!"

A little less than five years ago, Huelsenbeck was a high school Spanish teacher who had never thought much about the manufacturing and logistics industries. That was before she was hired on as the first full-time employee of Antique Candle Co., a firm that was then producing about 200 candles a day. Now, Huelsenbeck leads a team of 30 people who produce up to 6,000 candles a day.

Among her successes: making the financial and manufacturing decisions that led to the procurement and implementation of $200,000 in custom-made high-tech candle-making equipment. With a focus on lean processes, Huelsenbeck has improved operations and online commerce, helping to take the company from $350,000 in annual revenue to about $8 million in just four years.

Jacob Coffing, director of Testbed Operations, IN-MaC, Purdue University

"Never pass up on an opportunity to learn something new."

In his first manufacturing role after high school, Coffing quickly demonstrated enough potential that his employer invested in his ongoing education. With their assistance, he

earned an associate degree in advanced manufacturing, gaining broad manufacturing experience. At Purdue University's INMaC (Indiana Next Generation Manufacturing Competitiveness Center), Coffing now focuses on subtractive manufacturing, engaging with industrial affiliates and students on projects involving a range of advanced manufacturing processes and tools, including robot and cobot deployment, IoT machines sensors and monitoring and prototype development.

According to his nominator, Coffing is recognized as a subtractive manufacturing subject matter expert but is always learning new subject areas.

Jack Lopez, additive engineer/graduate researcher, Purdue University

"Identify the paradigm-shift technologies of your time, align yourself with the future you see unfolding, engage and contribute."

opez says his career in advanced manufacturing started with a fascination with the many materials an atom can be arranged into. That passion led to a materials engineering degree from Purdue University, where he also participated in a co-op program that landed him at Praxair Surface Technologies.

Upon graduation, he accepted a full-time position with the firm, where he spent four years as an additive manufacturing engineer. He helped advance the firm's material portfolio for additive manufacturing metal powders by evaluating chemistry and laser powder bed fusion (LBPF) process parameters. He recently returned to Purdue to pursue a Ph.D., with a focus on LBPF of novel alloys and composite materials.

Leading dramatic change

"This year we are honoring 30 young professionals who not only are doing amazing work now, but who will help our industries lead during a time of dramatic change," said Fred Cartwright, president and CEO of Conexus Indiana, in the announcement.

"This is the second year for Rising 30, and now we can count 60 young industry leaders who will inspire the next generation of talent and be at the forefront of new technologies, such as 3D printing, artificial intelligence and cobots, that define the 4th Industrial Revolution and beyond."

Fields represented among the Rising 30 honorees include: chief technology officers,

business owners, engineers, supply chain and health and safety managers and talent development specialists.