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Lt. Gov. Calley to help launch employee bus program at Zeeland's Primera Plastics

Primera Plastics in Zeeland is about to launch what it views as a solution to a shortage in skilled manufacturing job candidates: a company-financed training program that will hire young workers, train them and offer bus transportation to and from the job.

The initiative has attracted statewide attention, as Michigan Lt. Gov. Brian Calley will be present at the business 2-3 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 28, to officially launch the program.

"Pathways is a real job at Primera. People will be interviewed, go through a series of pre-employment testing, and, if hired, have a full-time job with benefits," Primera President Noel Cuellar said in a news release. "Pathways employees receive all of the same opportunities our existing employees already receive with the exception of the ride."

The "Primera Pathways" program will provide new workers with training in advanced plastics manufacturing and will offer free financial training from PNC Bank.

The free transportation will be available to the new employees for one year. To be eligible for the free bus rides, the applicants will have to be sponsored by either The Boys & Girls Club of Greater Holland, Destination Education, Escape Ministries, The Bridge, Macatawa Resource Center or Latin Americans United for Progress.

Primera Plastics employs 130 workers at its manufacturing facility in Zeeland. The company has 15 job openings, Cuellar said.

Workers trained through the program could also receive future job offers from Primera's business customers, Gentex and Herman Miller, according to a news release.

"It's a win-win for everyone. They learn new skills for a career, we get solid employees and at the same time help people get a leg up in the job market," Cuellar said.

The Boys and Girls Club of Greater Holland is helping to sponsor the transportation. Executive Director Craig Spoelhof said he sees the training program as a way to help high school graduates find a full-time job.

"This is a great way for young adults to get into industry and gain the type of technical and personal experience that will help them in the future," Spoelhof said in a news release.

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