

Why Manufacturing Matters

By Nasir Brown

Do you like working with your hands? If so, manufacturing might be the right fit for you. The industry offers countless hands-on jobs, from building products out of nothing to operating machines, welding, or assembling parts. Everywhere you look, there is a different type of manufacturing job.

Many people don't realize just how diverse the field is. Manufacturers help create everything from cars and electronics to the roller coasters you ride at amusement parks. The work also relies on skills you already learn in school—math, science, creativity, and teamwork.

The challenge today is that the workforce needs more manufacturers for the future. As the world continues to grow and upgrade, it is up to the next generation to step up and contribute. Luckily, there are many programs in the greater Pittsburgh area that prepare students for careers in this field. Manufacturing can offer strong salaries without requiring a four-year degree, and in many cases, training can be completed in just a few months. Some programs even allow you to start in high school so that you graduate with career-ready skills and a dependable job waiting for you.

Recently, I had the opportunity to visit two of these programs: the Industrial Arts Workshop (IAW) and New Century Careers (NCC). The Industrial Arts Workshop is a community development and workforce readiness program focused on welding for youth and young adults. Students there gain both technical and creative skills through hands-on and classroom learning.

While at IAW, I interviewed Nate, a student who plans to build his career around manufacturing and welding. He described welding as a difficult craft but also an art form that allows creativity and expression. Nate also emphasized the welcoming environment at IAW, where students feel safe to learn, collaborate, and bond over shared interests. As he put it, *"If you like art that includes metal, welding is for you."*

Programs like IAW and NCC are proof that manufacturing can be both practical and inspiring. They open doors to promising careers while showing that this industry is about more than machines—it's about creativity, community, and building the future.