

Upcoming Events

New Employee Orientation

Hosted by the Center for Competency Development.

August 18, 2026; 8:00 - 9:30 a.m.; in-person or virtual

\$40 per person;
Registration is required to
jackie.krawczak@kabu.net

Equipped Live

A live interview with Greg Winter.

August 24, 2026; 6:00 p.m.

A link to view the event will be emailed prior to the event.

Questions for Greg to answer can be submitted in advance to
jackie.krawczak@kabu.net



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The Apprenticeship Program Continues to Grow

The IFMC Registered Apprenticeship Program continues to build momentum — and the results speak for themselves.

Seven BGMs now participate in The Center for Competency Development's U.S. Department of Labor Registered Apprenticeship programs across three occupations: Industrial Manufacturing Production Technician, Welding, and Press-Brake Operator. Thirteen apprentices are currently developing their competencies on the job in the IFMC, with two more joining within the next 30 days. A new Powder Coating Apprenticeship is launching soon.

The numbers only tell half the story. Apprentices earn a nationally recognized U.S. Department of Labor credential — a portable, federal certification of their skills. The apprenticeships also give the mentors an opportunity to develop their mentorship skills and transfer valuable knowledge to others on the team.

You may want to consider joining the apprenticeship program if turnover, hard-to-fill positions, or training consistency are challenges for your BGM. An apprenticeship program is a proven solution — structured, federally recognized, and already working at seven IFMC locations.

The Department of Labor recognizes hundreds of occupations suitable for apprenticeships — from machining and maintenance to quality and logistics, and more. If there's a role at your BGM you'd like to explore for an apprenticeship, please reach out so we can research the possibility.

Apprenticeship contact: Jeff Jackson, Apprenticeship Program Manager — jeff.jackson@kabu.net; learn more at <https://thecompetencycenter.org/>

Another Success in Robotic Welding

When the idea of using robotic welders to manufacture impact cart frames—a stock product for Reacher Mfg. Corp.—was first introduced, robotic welding was still in its early stages in the IFMC. At the time, the product was set aside while the team continued building its automation experience and capabilities.



Today, those capabilities have grown significantly, making it the right time to revisit the project. With improved processes, programming expertise, and fixturing techniques, the team was able to develop a successful robotic welding solution that delivers meaningful gains in both productivity and consistency.

Brian Bishop of Impact Team K, LLC, designed the custom fixture using SolidWorks. Drawing on years of robotic welding experience, the fixture was engineered specifically for automation, with careful consideration given to robot access, part location, weld sequence, datum strategy, and efficient part loading. The design also takes advantage of robotic positioning to minimize clamping while maintaining repeatability and allowing access for the second stage of the welding process.

Brandon Bishop of Specialty Pulleys, Inc., programmed the robotic welder and assembled the fixture. By combining advanced robot programming with the purpose-built fixture, the team successfully automated this demanding weldment.

The custom fixture performed as intended, reducing the welding time for impact cart frames from more than an hour of manual welding to less than ten minutes using the robotic welder, while delivering a repeatable, high-quality product.

Because the IFMC manufactures a wide variety of products, many in low production volumes, every application presents its own unique challenges. This project highlights how the team's growing experience in robotic welding and custom fixturing allows them to evaluate opportunities that may not have been practical in the past. With additional robotic welding capacity available, the team looks forward to working with BGM's to identify applications where automation can support the quality and lead time requirements of current and future manufacturing needs.



Pictured (top) a weld on an impact cart frame.

Pictured (bottom) the robotic welder working on an impact cart frame.

Leadership Brags

Jessica Dietlin shared this brag about Heather Winfield, Lisa Kollien and Heidi Brunner – all Tran-Sol Corp. team members. “These three went above and beyond during a recent two-day internet outage. They utilized their cell phones to conduct business, printed labels at the public library and other area businesses and personally delivered labels and paperwork to TSC clients. It was all very manual work and much different from their usual processes. They pushed through and were able to get some hot shipments out the door in time to meet promises made to customers.”

Well done, Heather, Lisa, and Heidi! Way to dig in and get the job done even when circumstances were working against you!

Leadership Brags can be submitted to Jackie Krawczak; jackie.krawczak@kabu.net

Engineering Components Workshop Opportunity

The Center for Competency Development is hosting a Workshop on Engineering Components. This four-hour, two-day workshop will be taught by Pat Hantz and will cover the following and more:



**Center for
Competency Development**

Rollers . Bearings . Friction . Horse Power Calculations . Shaft Sizing . Gear Reducers . Pneumatics . Hydraulics . Belting . Beam Calculations . Shear Chain/Sprockets . Pressure Velocity

This two-part workshop will be held from 7:30 - 9:30 a.m. on August 26th and 27th.

Location of the workshop will be Alpena Community College, Van Lare Hall, Room 114.

Cost is \$85 per person; in-person only; must register for both days; space is limited

Register by contacting Jackie Krawczak: jackie.krawczak@kabu.net or 989.358.6175

View more information about the Center and upcoming training opportunities at <https://thecompetencycenter.org/>

Contact ESI

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Your Health Matters

A Message From USI, ESI's Health Insurance Broker

ABCs of Physical Therapy



Musculoskeletal pain can disrupt daily life, whether it's caused by injury, poor posture, or chronic conditions. Physical therapy offers a safe, effective way to address pain at its source — not just mask symptoms.

To get the most from your care, remember the ABCs:

Access: Choose an option that fits your lifestyle. Many clinics offer in-person appointments, while digital physical therapy programs provide guided exercises and real-time support from the convenience of your home.

Browse: Explore physical therapy services available through your employer or insurance. Both in-person visits and digital programs may be covered, so find what works best for you.

Consistency: Sticking with your treatment plan is key. Consistent care helps your body heal, rebuild strength, and prevent symptoms from returning.

By undergoing physical therapy treatment, you're not only addressing today's discomfort but also investing in your future well-being.

Summary Recommendation

Physical therapy for musculoskeletal pain is available via in-person and digital care; consistency in therapy is essential.

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