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## Reading-Muhlenberg Career and Technology Center unveils new welding and metal fabrication facility

The state-of-the-art facility is set to train the skilled metal workers needed by area manufacturers.



Eric Kahler, administrative director of the Reading Muhlenberg Career and Technology Center, cuts the ribbon to the new welding building at the center. (BILL UHRICH – READING EAGLE)

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PUBLISHED: September 20, 2023 at 9:30 a.m. | UPDATED: September 20, 2023 at 9:31 a.m.

The Reading-Muhlenberg Career and Technology Center new welding and metal fabrication facility is set to train the skilled metal workers needed by area manufacturers.

The RMCTC unveiled the state-of-the-art building Monday at a ribbon-cutting ceremony attended by representatives of the Greater Reading Chamber Alliance, area manufacturers, school administrators and state officials.

“We’re trying to make sure we train and provide skills to the next workforce,” said Eric D. Kahler, administrative director of the RMCTC.

Following the ribbon cutting, the group toured the new facility adjacent to the center’s main building at 2615 Warren Road in Muhlenberg Township.

The building houses 25 welding stations equipped with advanced technology. It can accommodate 50 students, split into morning and afternoon training sessions.



Eric Kahler, administrative director of the Reading Muhlenberg Career and Technology Center, shows visitors the new welding building at the center. (BILL UHRICH – READING EAGLE)

Students completing the three-year program can earn a certification from the American Welding Society, Kahler said. They typically start in 10th grade, he noted, and work their way through the hands-on course.

“Hopefully, by their senior year, we can get them into an apprenticeship and into an internship in a co-op setting,” he said, “and then that usually leads to some type of full-time employment.”

Welding is a high-priority occupation, Kahler said, and qualified welders are sought by many local fabricators.

“Many of those you see here today are representatives of local manufacturing companies,” he said. “These guys are really invested in what our kids do here and what they learn because they’re all looking for qualified welders right now.”

The welding program is in such high demand that it outgrew its previous space in the main building, Kahler said.

Muhlenberg Greene Architects of Wyomissing was hired by the partnering districts to investigate means of increasing the program’s capacity, said James Sarro, a principal with the firm.

“We did a study, did some preliminary plans and some cost estimates,” Sarro said, “and they (the districts) decided that a new building was the best route to go.”



Eric Kahler, administrative director of the Reading Muhlenberg Career and Technology Center, stands in the new precision machine shop that was formerly the welding shop. (BILL UHRICH – READING EAGLE)

The former welding area in the main building was converted for use as a new precision-machine workshop where students are trained to operate computer numerical control, or CNC, machines and other high-tech industrial machines, Kahler said.

The total cost of \$5.6 million for both buildings was jointly funded by the two school districts.

The Reading and Muhlenberg districts fully support career and job pathways to graduation, Muhlenberg Superintendent Dr. Joseph Macharola said.

“Both districts are extremely excited about the opportunities for our students to have this kind of facility,” Macharola said. “It will help the greater-Reading economic growth. This is just a fantastic opportunity for everyone.”

**Michelle Lynch | Reporter**