A few years ago, Mr. Ross got together with some other area manufacturers to discuss the problem. With the help of Duquesne University in Pittsburgh and a local foundation, they developed a training program aimed at people who had planned to go to college and indicated an interest in a career but had ended up in dead-end jobs. So far, Lesker has hired about 15 graduates of the program, which is called Manufacturing 2000, including Dan McKenzie.

MORE EARNING POWER

Mr. McKenzie, 27, had just finished a stint with the Marine Corps and was working in a pizza shop. He saw the program’s ad for free training and jumped on it. Now, he works for Lesker as a machinist and has taken some college courses toward an industrial-engineering degree. As a result, Mr. McKenzie, who made $8.50 an hour delivering pizza, has his earning power increase substantially. The average annual wage in the manufacturing sector here is $42,000. The sector, which employs about 15% of the region’s workers, accounts for 20% of the region’s wages, according to Barry Maciak of Duquesne’s Institute for Economic Transformation.

Local companies paid $1,250 for each Manufacturing 2000 graduate and considered it a bargain. “We don’t have the resources to train and recruit that larger companies have,” says Lesker’s Mr. Ross. Once it gets people, the company is loath to lose them.

Moreover, the average age of machinists, welders and tool grinders is 43, and welders rarely wait until they are 65 to retire because their work is so physically demanding. So, the company has to think about the future.

But Lesker also feels a loyalty to its work force, a luxury many public companies can’t afford. Kurt Lesker III, Lesker’s president, remembers sales plummeting after the fall of the Berlin Wall dried up the company’s defense-related business. “We went through several years of break even. We could have laid people off but we decided to keep everyone because if it had to get better,” he says. “If it was a public company, I would have been fired.”

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. BOB RILEY
OF ALABAMA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, July 11, 2001

Mr. RILEY. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably detained for rollcall No. 211. Encouraging Corporations to Contribute to Faith-Based Organizations. Had I been present I would have voted “yea.” I was also unavoidably detained for rollcall No. 212. Expressing the Sense of Congress in support of Victims of Torture. Had I been present I would have voted “yea.” I was also unavoidably detained for rollcall No. 213. Authorization of the Use of the Rotunda for Presenting Congressional Gold Medals to the Navajo Code Talkers. Had I been present I would have voted “yea”.

HON. SCOTT McINNIS
OF COLORADO
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, July 11, 2001

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I take this opportunity to recognize a courageous man for his dedicated years of service to the United States during some of the most horrific times of World War II. I am proud to honor Mr. Fritz Brennecke—a devoted veteran—for his enduring flights over war-stricken Europe as a bomber pilot in the effort to ensure Allied victory during the war. As Mr. Brennecke was harnessed in his waist gunner position aboard a B–24, he fought valiantly against German fighter planes that were attempting to hinder the bombing runs. The waist gunner position, appropriately named for its location behind the wings of the B–24 at the waist of the airship, was capable of defending the aircraft by firing out either side of the fighting bomber. Amidst flak bombs and insistent attacks, it was not unusual for a mission to return to base with only three or four planes out of the original group with nearly seven planes. Throughout his noble service to the United States, Fritz participated in missions attacking Grottaglie, Italy, Ploesti and other German strongholds.

In 1945, the bombing runs subsided and offered the distinguished war veteran an opportunity to return home. Upon returning to Colorado, Fritz completed his formal education at the University of Denver and eventually retired to Montrose after establishing a career in live-stock and produce.

Mr. Speaker, while Fritz Brennecke considers the real heroes of World War II to be those who were never able to return home, his recognition with two Presidential Citations and an Air Medal with five oak clusters testify to...