New regional partnership to focus on job training
Cincinnati United Way wants to connect employers, candidates.

By Rick McCrabb
Staff Writer

The general manager of a local manufacturing company said there’s a “constant cry” among peers in his business:

“We’ve got openings and we can’t find good people,” said Scott Ellsworth of Tipco Punch, a Hamilton company that builds tooling components for the auto industry.

Then he added: “Finding solid, qualified people is very difficult.”

The United Way of Greater Cincinnati and its partners are hoping a new regional partnership will connect potential employees with companies looking to add work force.

Named Partners for a Competitive Workforce (Partners), the group brings together businesses, work force investment boards, chambers of commerce, educational institutions, labor, community organizations and philanthropic entities from across the region, said Ross Meyer, executive director of the United Way.

He called it “a formal partnership of key players.”

The group will develop potential employees in the highest demand fields: health care, construction and advanced manufacturing, he said.

Eventually, following an analysis of the work force to detect employee shortages, other fields may be added, he said. “We want to close the gap.”

Partners will be chaired by John Prout, president/CEO of TriHealth Inc.; Father Michael Graham, president of Xavier University, will serve as vice chair; and United Way of Greater Cincinnati will provide management for the partnership.

Meyer said the partnership will be guided by a Partners Council comprised of top leadership from area businesses, chambers, community colleges and other educational institutions, work force boards, labor, job training organizations, philanthropic funders, and other key stakeholders.

Despite persistently high unemployment, half of all local employers say they expect to have difficulty finding qualified workers for job openings over the next few years, according to a local survey conducted in 2010, Meyer said.

Nationwide, the U.S. Chamber estimates that at least 3 million jobs go unfilled due to the skills
gap; a figure expected to reach 7 million by 2018, he said.

This growing skills gap threatens the region’s economic competitiveness, as quality of the work force is a critical factor for businesses looking to grow or relocate, he said.

The partnership will focus on collecting and disseminating data about labor market trends, raising and aligning public and private funds, and advancing public policy changes.

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