

St. Paul Bakery Partners with Local 22 for Apprenticeship Program

BCTGM Local 22 members at Baldinger Bakery in St. Paul, Minn. are among the first union workers in the country to benefit from a new apprenticeship program

developed by the AFL-CIO's Working for America Institute.

Minnesota is one of three states where the AFL-CIO's Working for America Institute, armed with a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor, is promoting the Industrial Manufacturing Technician (IMT) apprenticeship program. BCTGM Local 22 President Ron Mohrland approached representatives of the Baldinger Bakery about participating in the program, which was designed specifically for manufacturing workers.

Baldinger's is a fourth-generation family-owned company that has been located in St. Paul since it was founded in 1888. In 2012, Baldinger's needed to expand and relocated the bakery to a "rebuilt, high-tech facility" Mohrland said.

The new \$10 million high-tech state-of-the-art bakery is the first commercial bakery in the Midwest to receive LEED certification. According to Mohrland, when it's

running at full capacity, the bakery can produce about 65,000 buns per hour. The company viewed the apprenticeship program as an opportunity to ensure workers' skills were upgraded and keep pace with the demands of operating the highly sophisticated equipment.

Additionally, by participating in the Industrial Manufacturing Technician apprenticeship program, the company is able to customize many aspects of the curriculum to meet the plant's needs.

"There's a basic education that these guys are getting, but the company is helping to write the program to what needs to be taught specifically at our facility," Mohrland said.

About one-third of the 60-plus Local 22 members working in the facility are expected to participate, from new hires to more experienced factory workers. Apprentices will get paid for the time they spend in classroom or on-the-job training, and when they complete the program, they will



BCTGM Local 22 members Keith Strong (left) and Eladio Saldivar (right) are enrolled in the training program to become a "Certified Production Technician."

The 18-month training program includes four 32-hour classes: safety awareness; quality practices; manufacturing processes and production; and maintenance awareness. The training is offered as an inter-active online class.

U.S. Senator Al Franken recently visited the high-tech plant to learn more about the apprentice program. "So much of manufacturing has become high-tech, so much of the investment in technology rather than the workers," noted Franken, who has championed investing in worker education and training. "This is something I care about a lot – skilling up the workforce."

The AFL-CIO Working for America Institute partners with Jobs for the Future, a national workforce intermediary, the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership and labor-management intermediaries to expand and enhance apprenticeship for production workers in the manufacturing sector in eight states. The project is designed to promote the growth of the manufacturing sector and advance the skills of production workers.

add seven industry-recognized credentials and certifications to their resumes – not to mention the \$1.50 per hour raise.



Pictured here (left to right) following a meeting with U.S. Sen. Al Franken (D-Minn.) are Heidi Braun, Pima Technical College; Jerome Balsimo, Wisc. Regional Training Partnership; Ron Mohrland, BCTGM L. 22; Todd Dahlstrom, MN AFL-CIO; Bob Baldinger, Baldinger Bakery; Sen. Franken; Steve Baldinger, Baldinger Bakery; Keith Strong and Eladio Saldivar, L. 22 members and IMT Apprentices.