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Scholarships Available to Pennsylvanians Wanting to Learn a Skilled Trade *PA Chamber members join together to address the jobs skills gap*

The growing skills gap in the Commonwealth is an issue that we often hear about from our members and one that I've previously written about in this column. In fact, the difficulty that employers have finding qualified candidates to fill open positions has become such a concern that the PA Chamber has made workforce development a key initiative as we enter into our second century of operation. While there isn't a one-size fits all solution that will solve this problem, one important piece to the puzzle is ensuring that the next generation of workers receive the necessary training needed to meet the demands of the Commonwealth's growing career fields – especially in the skilled trades. To that end, we are proud to team up with the mikeroweWORKS Foundation, to offer scholarships to Pennsylvanians interested in pursuing a career in the skilled trades as part of the 2017 Work Ethic Scholarship Program.

This innovative collaboration developed as a follow-up to the PA Chamber's 2016 Workforce Summit, in which Mike Rowe, CEO of the mikeroweWORKS Foundation, was the keynote speaker. At the summit, which was held last spring, the results of the PA Chamber's 2016 Workforce Survey were unveiled to show that more than 50 percent of employers surveyed believe that recruiting qualified candidates is very or extremely difficult. Additionally, 57 percent said they think it will get more difficult within the next five years, and 56 percent said they are having difficulty filling technical/skilled trade jobs.

That's why the PA Chamber has created our Start the Conversation HERE initiative – a grassroots campaign aimed at creating a meaningful dialogue among employers, educators and students about the opportunities that exist in the skilled trades and other growing career fields in the Commonwealth. As part of this effort, we put out a call to our membership to help us close the jobs skills gap by raising funds through the PA Chamber's Education Foundation to go towards scholarships in the skilled trades. Our members met this challenge head-on, by donating a significant amount in a relatively short period of time. The money raised through the PA Chamber Education Foundation will go directly towards qualified Pennsylvanians who apply for the mikeroweWORKS Foundation's Work Ethic Scholarship Program.

The mikeroweWORKS Foundation's Work Ethic Scholarship Program gives scholarships to people getting trained for skilled jobs that are in high demand. With the help of the Commonwealth's business community, the PA Chamber will contribute more than \$70,000 in scholarship funds towards this year's program.

We're proud to join Rowe and the mikeroweWORKS Foundation in their mission to increase public awareness about the growing demand for workers in the skilled trades and help ensure the next generation of workers is prepared to meet the needs of the evolving workforce, especially in the Commonwealth. I encourage all those interested in applying for a 2017 Work Ethic Scholarship to visit the mikeroweWORKS Foundation's website, <http://mikeroweworks.org/scholarship/>. **The 2017 Work Ethic Scholarship Program is accepting applications from now. The deadline to apply is Friday, May 19, 2017.** Businesses that are interested in learning more about making a tax-deductible donation

to the PA Chamber's "Start the Skilled Trades Scholarship Here" initiative can find more information on the PA Chamber's website, www.PAChamber.org.

Gene Barr
President and CEO
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