

Good Evening Legislators,

My name is Wendy Gentile and I am a graduate of the Ten-week Welding Program at Three Rivers Community College. This program has given me the unique opportunity to redirect my career path, as well as, provide me with the experience, knowledge and skills required to quickly enter the workforce at Electric Boat. In short, it has changed my life.

After high school, I was expected to attend and graduate college. So off I went.... I attended college, I worked hard and I obtained a degree in Elementary education. But something was not right; my heart was not in alignment with my choice of career. Shortly after college, I got married and started a family. During the next decade, I put my family first and worked at a few menial jobs that allowed me to raise a daughter and support my husband's career.

At my last employer my job was downsized and I found myself at a fork in the road. Do I continue working at jobs that I was only a little excited about or do I try something new? I was up for trying something new. This is how I became involved with the Manufacturing Pipeline program. The welding course is located at Grasso Tech in Groton. The program prepared me for a new and often exciting career. Welding was offered in the evening that allowed me to have a part time job during the day. Over the course of 10 weeks we were exposed to hands on learning, blueprint reading and networking opportunities from companies that needed welders. Part of the hands on learning included using tools of the trade. Before this class I had only seen

pictures of some of the tools that I now use on a daily basis. The class had only 18 participants of which 2 of us were women. Having a small class allowed us to receive individual support to become better at welding. Electric Boat is only one company that has a need of skilled workers to fill the gap of a retiring workforce. From the group of 18, 8 of us were hired at Electric Boat.

When at work I meet people everyday that have been through the Manufacturing Pipeline or know someone who has participated. The learning does not stop here. Three Rivers has giving me the opportunity to pursue additional courses on my new path that will enable me to move up the ladder at Electric Boat.

I strongly encourage you to continue to provide funding for these programs. It is an important part of the future for Connecticut and training people for the jobs of the future.