SBA-funded technical assistance program helps Penn. auto parts manufacturing firm Carbi-Tech, Inc. grow from garage to facility that employs 20 people

VANDERGRIFT, PA – SBA Administrator Karen Mills toured Carbi-Tech, Inc. with U.S. Congressman Mark Critz Monday, to learn how the firm, which used an SBA-funded technical assistance program at nearby Saint Vincent College, has become part of the auto industry upswing.

Carbi-Tech, which used SBA resource partners, has grown from a rented garage making spare parts to a 17,000 sq. ft. facility that produces and supplies custom precision parts to the nation’s auto industry.

America’s economic recovery is directly linked to manufacturing plants – like Carbi-Tech, said Mills. “Manufacturing is a big initiative for the President – this is where recovery is happening,” Mills said. “Today’s manufacturing shops are very high-tech and SBA is working with resource partners at colleges like St. Vincent’s to create advanced manufacturing opportunities.”

Saint Vincent College is part of a network of small business development centers funded by the SBA and commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Small business owners and entrepreneurs receive technical assistance on topics from writing a business plans to exporting.

“I was a tool and die maker by trade, but always dreamed of starting my own business and taking my talent to the next level,” said Rhett Crooks, co-owner of Carbi-Tech. “Sixteen years ago, I founded Carbi-Tech after taking a class titled The First Step at Saint Vincent College.

Crooks, who now employs 20 Pennsylvanians, including his son, said he is working with local schools to bring in new workers – a task he finds challenging. Both Mills and Critz cited the rich history of manufacturing in towns throughout Western Pennsylvania, like Vandergrift.

“There is an excellent manufacturing heritage here – where fathers taught their sons a craft,” Mills said. “Today, at Carbi-Tech and at plants throughout the country, we now have fathers and sons working together.” Mills said small supply shops like Carbi-Tech will benefit from the President’s new funding initiative for community colleges.

“The President wants to prepare young adults with the skill sets needed to work in today’s modern and very computerized manufacturing shops,” she said. “We want to help companies find talented workers to grow the industry and create thousands of good-paying jobs.”

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