



James Vann

**James Vann:
From “just paying the bills,”
to a stable, career with long-
term possibilities**

Evanston resident, James Vann had previously worked in the roofing and construction industry, but was looking for a stable, long-term career that would continually expose him to new knowledge. He wasn't sure what direction to take, and found the instability of his current work frustrating since he felt there was no career path, and no future.

During a meeting with his Youth Job Center of Evanston Counselor, James heard about the opportunities offered by the Manufacturing Careers Internship Program (MCIP). Previously unaware of the current growth in the manufacturing industry, he wanted to explore the job-building skills opportunity to prepare for employment.

What is MCIP?

Business & Careers Services, Incorporated (BCS), which manages the Illinois workNet Center in Arlington Heights, created the Manufacturing Careers Internship Program. BCS teamed up with Medusa Consulting to design a program that exposes youth to opportunities in the manufacturing industry and provides a pipeline of workers desperately needed by area manufacturers. Although not defined initially as a specific goal, permanent job offers have been offered to a high percentage of youth participants, *making the MCIP program even more powerful*. The program is funded by the Workforce Board of Northern Cook County.

How MCIP works

Interested people between the ages of 18 – 21 years can apply to MCIP. The program offers a multi-step approach that provides youth with a 10-week, industry-based training module which includes a two week boot camp and an eight week, paid internship. During the boot camp, group members receive an overview of the manufacturing industry, tour major employers, complete an OSHA safety certification and then participate at a specialized job placement fair. They then complete the internship.

MCIP was very attractive to James, since it included a 2-week boot camp, an 8-week *paid* internship, tours of area employers and the ability to learn about available jobs. It provided unprecedented access to major area manufacturers, who were willing to teach youth job seekers about available jobs in this industry. James believed that MCIP would help provide him with the experience he needed to create confidence and a positive attitude to promote a positive impression to potential employers.

During the MCIP Boot Camp field trips, James visited multiple employers and discovered that he liked the warehouse environment. He was particularly intrigued by Skokie-based, [Midland Manufacturing](#), a company founded in 1951, that manufactures valves and level measurement devices for tank cars and other mobile tanks that transport a wide variety of liquid commodities. It operates as a subsidiary of OPW Fluid Transfer Group.

James decided at the MCIP Job Placement Fair that he would like to complete his internship at Midland Manufacturing. At Midland, James learned about proper valve specifications and performed assembly functions. He feels that he improves daily by learning something new every day. *In eight weeks he learned how to build a valve from scratch, test it and package it all by himself.*

What does the future hold for James Vann?

James said he gets along with everyone at Midland, and is grateful and thankful for their time and commitment. He appreciates that his coworkers and supervisors “taught him *and* showed him the right way of doing something, instead of just showing him.” James said, “I love Midland – I feel like this is where I’m supposed to be. I just soak everything up.” He thinks the Manufacturing Careers Internship Program is a great program—and that it succeeds because it connects youth who are willing to learn, and companies like Midland who are willing to take the time to teach.

For more information about careers in the manufacturing industry and the MCIP program, email Amanda Rothenburger, Youth Services Coordinator at arothernburger@worknetncc.com.