

# WESTERN ILLINOIS WORKS

Serving Adams, Brown, Hancock, Henderson, Knox,  
McDonough, Pike, Schuyler, and Warren Counties

## CLIENT TESTIMONIAL



### Information About You

**Name:**

Joanne Beeler

**Organization:**

The Knapheide Manufacturing Company

**Job Title:**

Human Resources Supervisor

### Becoming a Business Partner of Western Illinois Works

I have been involved with Western Illinois Works (WIW) for eight years. When I worked at a staffing office in town previously, I met Blanche and participated in several things they were sponsoring, including job fairs.

When I came to Knapheide, because of my role in the company, I was asked to represent our company as a business partner of WIW. At Knapheide I work in all facets of our company from assisting with hiring for our production positions and office roles, to union relations, working with employees on personal/work issues, project management, legal compliance, etc.

I started on the board as a business partner for several years then was asked to join the executive board. I feel that I was able to actively participate in the conversations about how we could improve things in our area, which of course would positively affect our business. We have also been able to work with WIW on training programs for our employees, work study programs, and other things. We definitely can see the benefit of working with them.

I am proud to be on a board with so many influential members of business, education, and communities in our nine counties. We typically can all see the same issues but have various thoughts on how to get better outcomes, so we make a great group together.

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### Western Illinois Works Purpose

One of the main purposes of WIW is to help upskill/retrain the current workforce when it is needed. We also want to give students information about what is available in the workforce. Not every job needs a 4-year college education, so what are other options to include direct to the workforce or a technical training program?

We want to show them what they can be doing during high school to prepare for the workforce. The FAME program is a good example of this. WIW, JWCC and a group of local employees have worked together over the last year to develop this program which targets high school students to bring them into the skilled trades field.

There was a lot of discussion back and forth before it was all put in place on how to make it work best for all involved. Now the initial class of students has begun working and going to school to be apprentices in the maintenance area at these companies.

## Value Western Illinois Works Brings to Knapheide

We have worked with WIW on many training programs to help upskill our supervisors, automation team, etc. This is a huge benefit to the company because we can send more people through training for a lesser cost. We have also worked with WIW on work study programs, career fairs and other things related to bringing more people into the workforce.

## Value Knapheide Brings to Western Illinois Works

I believe that Knapheide has been a good business partner. We have been asked by many organizations to show our support and we have been able to partner with WIW and so many of the other members (JWCC, IDES) over the years by working on various projects together.

## My Role with Western Illinois Works

As the chair, I think my purpose is to start and engage in conversation. Many times, in meetings, nobody wants to be the first to speak up. I will do that to get the conversation rolling and then it blooms from there and is typically very productive.

## Western Illinois' Impact in the Community

WIW is here to be a positive force to help those when in need to be able to move towards a goal and a better life by working on their skills and gaining necessary experience/knowledge to get the next level up job to support their families.

They are also here to support our local education systems and business, and connect those individuals in need with the proper people to get to those end results.

## Most Rewarding Aspect of Partnering with Western Illinois Works

It is rewarding to see how when all of us on the board work together, we can come up with great ideas of how to make improvements that not only affect all of our businesses, but the job seekers in our area.

## How Western Illinois Works Impacts Knapheide Employees

We have a number of employees who wanted the opportunity to move into new roles. The funding that WIW has assisted us with on the incumbent worker grants has allowed several people to return to school and learn the necessary skills to receive these promotions and are now have the knowledge to work in these more technical positions.



*Joanne recently accepted the Western Illinois Works Award for Business Leadership on behalf of her employer, Knapheide Manufacturing. Joanne was also recognized for her leadership as Chair of the Workforce Innovation Board of Western Illinois.*

## Why I Support Western Illinois Works

WIW is here for the greater good of our nine counties and all the communities within. From the student to job seeker to businesses, they want everyone to be successful.

## Looking Forward

I think we will continue to work together on training, other projects, working with JWCC when new training needs come up. I hope that I will be able to continue being a business contributor on the board after my term as the chair this fall.

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