

## **Proactive Workforce Development Needed**

The Wichita Falls region strives to be pro-active rather than reactive when it comes to providing the best workforce we can for our existing manufacturing employers. As of June 2006, the region had 7,800 skilled manufacturing jobs in Wichita Falls and the surrounding communities, spread across 117 manufactures ranging from one man shops, to large companies with over 1,000 employees.

While the number of local jobs in manufacturing has decreased in recent years, the volume of goods being produced has increased due to more efficient practices and automation. Consequently, the skills required by today's manufacturing workforce are highly technical and the wages being paid for these skills are also on the rise.

For years, experts have predicted that entry level wages and benefits for technical jobs will eventually equal, and in some cases outpace, those of college graduates. This prediction is coming true in Wichita Falls. Entry level wages for skilled positions range from \$26,000 to \$31,200 and once the worker is established, the range can jump up to \$33,500 to \$50,000 annually.

Our community's ability to field a future workforce cannot be left to chance. The 4(a) Sales Tax Board, BCI, Vernon College, Midwestern State University, Workforce Resource, Region 9, and the Texas Workforce Commission are leading the way locally to address this important issue. Please contact the BCI with your ideas and interest in participating.