

# Partners for a World-Class Plastics Workforce

**W**hen Wilden Plastics opened its only U.S. facility in Peachtree City, Ga., everything was in place for the company to continue its 50-year tradition of quality plastics manufacturing. Everything, that is, except enough qualified workers, especially mold-makers.

"When we built this facility, we had a need for mold-makers, but there were no mold-makers available on the market," says Dr. Peter Schulz, president of Wilden. "We had to find a way to train and hire mold-makers.

Therefore, we tried to do an apprentice program, as we do in Germany." Wilden is headquartered in Germany, where apprenticeships are common, and Schulz believed it was possible to use the same training methods here in Georgia.

Wilden met with the Department of Technical and Adult Education's business development specialists at Quick Start to get the ball rolling. In turn, DTAE and Quick Start approached Griffin Technical College to partner in custom tailoring a program to meet Wilden's needs for skilled mold-makers. According to Dr. Coy Hodges, president of Griffin Tech, "Our machine tool technology program has been operating for a number of years. We've trained numerous students to become tool and die makers, so we believed this was a natural foundation leading into a program to train mold-makers as well."



(L) Dr. Peter Schulz, President, Wilden Plastics  
(R) Dr. Coy Hodges, President, Griffin Tech

The result of this partnership is the Mold-Making Apprenticeship program, a joint venture between education and industry. Dr. Ken Breeden, commissioner of DTAE, says, "The program is designed as a collaboration and a cooperative program between the high school, the technical college, and the industry or business."

The three-year program offers students a strong mix of classroom and workplace experience, preparing graduates to become journeymen mold-makers anywhere in the world. Students attend school several days a week and work at the company the rest of the week, under the supervision of a master mold-maker. A mentor at Griffin Tech coordinates communication between the apprentices, the college and the company, making sure both the students and the business are getting the results they need.

As part of this cooperative venture, Wilden also encourages other companies to take advantage of the benefits of the Mold-Making Apprenticeship program. Schulz is pleased with the success Wilden has had with the program. "It's a good possibility for young people to start a new job and to be skilled — it's very important that we have more and more skilled workers," he says.

Through the Mold-Making Apprenticeship program, those needed workers are now being

trained and are available to work with Wilden and other companies around the state. The program has grown to include other companies working with Griffin Tech, and it also has been added to the curriculum at Appalachian Technical College in Jasper, Ga. The apprenticeship program has been very successful, and there are plans to expand it to offer additional plastics training for operators, including set-up technicians, plastics engineering technicians and maintenance mechanics.

By working together, DTAE, the technical colleges around the state and plastics manufacturers throughout Georgia can build the skilled workforce needed by the industry for it to continue being one of the fastest growing manufacturing segments in the world. Having partners working to create a world-class workforce in the plastics industry benefits everyone. **QS**

## 250,000 Expected at K 2001 Trade Fair



**I**f you're involved with the plastics and rubber industry, the place to be this fall is Dusseldorf, Germany. K 2001, the 15th International Trade Fair for Plastics and Rubber, will take place there October 25 through November 1, 2001. The K show is the industry's preeminent trade fair, bringing together industry experts, suppliers and customers to exchange industry news and advances. And Quick Start will be there.

With the continued increase of plastics and rubber facilities in Georgia, K 2001 is an important opportunity to promote the state. Quick Start, in partnership with the Georgia Department of Industry, Trade & Tourism, will host "Georgia, USA," an exhibit to enhance Georgia's image within the industry, develop and maintain industry contacts, and attract plastics companies to Georgia.

For more information, visit [www.k-online.de](http://www.k-online.de).