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1
20
26

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In this issue:

► A RECORD-BREAKING CELEBRATION
OF INDUSTRY & IMPACT *p4*

SPOTLIGHTING THE STATE'S TOP MANUFACTURERS *p14*

GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATES ADDRESS NJ MANUFACTURING *p32*



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FEATURES



'MADE in New Jersey'
Manufacturing Day 2025:
**A Record-Breaking Celebration
of Industry & Impact**

4



Built To Last
These businesses and the employees that
make it all possible are truly, 'Unsung Heroes.'

10



All American Poly Corp:
Strengthening Human Capital
to Power Sustainable Growth

11



Brewster Washers: A Fifth-
Generation Manufacturer Embraces
Cybersecurity Compliance

12



'MADE in New Jersey'
Manufacturing Day 2025:
**Spotlighting the State's
Top Manufacturers**

14



Meet the Winners
of the 2025 'MADE in NJ'
Manufacturing Day Awards

28



Celebrating
Those Who Champion
New Jersey Manufacturing

30



TRENTON TALKS
At the Crossroads of Policy & Industry:
**Gubernatorial Candidates
Address NJ Manufacturing**

32

ADDITIONAL CONTENTS



Manufacturing Trends to Watch

2

Future Makers & Creators Tour
Continues Its Mission in 2025 34
The Role of Advertising in NJ's
Manufacturing Renaissance 36
Manufacturing Momentum: How
South Jersey Is Leading the Way 38

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New Jersey's manufacturing magazine, sharing the voice of
the industry. Find the latest updates, resources, and trends
shaping manufacturing and hear from the thought leaders
driving the industry forward.



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Manufacturing Trends to Watch

How New Jersey Manufacturers Are Adapting to a Changing Industrial Landscape

Manufacturing isn't standing still, it's transforming. Every year brings new pressures and opportunities that force companies to adapt how they operate, train, and protect their businesses. For New Jersey's diverse manufacturing community, that transformation is unfolding across four key areas that define both present challenges and future potential: reshoring and local supply chain reinforcement, AI and smart factory integration, cybersecurity compliance (CMMC), and workforce rebuilding through apprenticeships and upskilling.

From rising tariffs and supply chain realignments to the fast-approaching CMMC mandate this November, these shifts aren't just industry headlines; they're decisions manufacturers must confront today to stay competitive tomorrow. Each trend reflects a movement toward greater independence, smarter technology adoption, and stronger workforce development across the Garden State.

For New Jersey's manufacturers, these trends are immediate priorities shaping how businesses compete and grow. Understanding and embracing them now will determine which manufacturers lead the next era of innovation and which risk falling behind.

Reshoring & Local Supply Chain Reinforcement

Supply chain resilience remains a top priority for manufacturers nationwide—and New Jersey is no exception. After years of global

disruptions, many businesses are reshoring production to reduce risk, improve control, and speed up delivery. Now, another major factor is accelerating this trend: tariffs.

As trade tensions rise and import costs increase, the financial case for overseas production is weakening. When factoring in transportation expenses, geopolitical uncertainty, and long lead times, reshoring is becoming a more practical, cost-effective, and strategic choice.

In New Jersey, the "American-made" movement is gaining momentum. Manufacturers and consumers alike see domestic production not only as a point of pride, but as a smart, long-term investment.

With rising public and private investment in local capacity, New Jersey manufacturers who embrace reshoring are reducing risk—and positioning themselves as leaders in reliability, sustainability, and national economic growth.

AI & Smart Factory Integration

Artificial intelligence is no longer emerging; it's here, and it's transforming manufacturing. Across New Jersey, manufacturers are using AI to enhance production planning, quality control, and predictive maintenance. These tools are boosting efficiency, minimizing downtime, and unlocking smarter ways to operate.

Smart factories powered by AI and machine learning can detect bottlenecks, predict equipment failures, and optimize energy use in real time. The result: greater consistency, higher output, and faster, data-driven decisions.

What's especially promising is how accessible AI has become. Smaller manufacturers can now implement scalable solutions without major infrastructure changes, leveling the playing field and driving competitiveness. Low-code and no-code AI platforms are making adoption even easier, enabling teams with limited technical skills to implement smart solutions tailored to their operations.

As adoption continues, AI will be a key force in advancing New Jersey's manufacturing sector—fueling innovation, productivity, and global reach.

Cybersecurity Compliance (CMMC)

As digital transformation accelerates, cybersecurity is no longer optional, especially for manufacturers tied to the defense supply chain.

Starting in early November 2025, the Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification (CMMC) becomes a mandatory requirement for Department of Defense (DoD) contracts. This marks a major shift: manufacturers that don't meet the required standards risk losing current contracts and missing out on future defense opportunities.

For companies looking to break

into DoD work, compliance is now the cost of entry.

CMMC is designed to ensure manufacturers protect sensitive government and client data through verified cybersecurity practices and continuous accountability. Certification signals that a business can be trusted to handle defense-related information—offering a significant advantage in a tightly regulated and competitive space.

Across New Jersey, this change is prompting manufacturers of all sizes to assess vulnerabilities and strengthen data protections. Those who act now won't just stay compliant; they'll stay competitive in a defense landscape that values both innovation and integrity.

Workforce Rebuilding through Apprenticeships & Upskilling

Behind every technological advancement stands a skilled workforce—and right now, that workforce is in high demand. As seasoned professionals retire, manufacturers face a dual challenge: attracting new talent while upskilling existing teams to keep pace with modern production demands.

Across New Jersey, manufacturers are responding by building strong partnerships with educational institutions, community organizations, and workforce programs. Apprenticeships and earn-while-you-learn models are becoming critical pathways for developing hands-on skills in

areas like robotics, CNC machining, and digital manufacturing.

Organizations such as NJMEP continue to play a key role in connecting employers with training programs that align with real-world industry needs. By investing in continuous education, mentorship, and career development, manufacturers are not only filling skills gaps; they're creating sustainable pipelines for the next generation of makers and innovators.

Manufacturing in New Jersey has always been defined by resilience, innovation, and the drive to adapt. The trends shaping the industry today—reshoring, AI integration, cybersecurity compliance, and workforce rebuilding—are not passing developments; they're strategic imperatives that will determine the long-term success of businesses across the state.

As tariffs, technology, and talent pipelines continue to evolve, manufacturers who take proactive steps now will be the ones setting the pace for years to come. Those investing in smarter systems, secure operations, and skilled people are not just reacting to change but redefining what it means to be 'MADE in New Jersey.'

Follow the latest from New Jersey manufacturing by following @NJMEP on X, Facebook, and LinkedIn. Stay engaged all year long to help protect and support the industry.



'MADE IN NEW JERSEY'
MANUFACTURING DAY

'MADE in New Jersey'
Manufacturing Day 2025:

▶ **A Record-Breaking
Celebration of
Industry & Impact**

Anyone who's heard Senator Michael Testa Jr. (R-1) speak knows he often references the iconic "Trenton Makes, The World Takes" sign as he enters Trenton from Vineland. Years ago, Michele Siekerka and I presented him with a photo of that sign—customized in NJMEP colors. Only two copies were made: one for Senator Testa, and one for my office. Recently, Senator Testa suggested that Michele should have one as well. Today, we surprised her by presenting the second copy—and it's not easy to catch Michele off guard. The question now is... who gets the next one?

Peter C. Connolly

A Gathering Like No Other

On October 3, 2025, more than 1,000 manufacturing leaders, educators, students, and policymakers convened at iPlay America in Freehold, New Jersey for the 13th annual 'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Day, the largest in the event's history. This milestone moment was more than a celebration — it was a declaration that New Jersey's manufacturing industry is strong, collaborative, and ready to lead.

With a day packed full of candid conversations, breakout sessions, live demos, networking, and honors, attendees experienced the full spectrum of what makes this industry indispensable to the state's economy. It was also a day full of flexibility — with an unexpected pivot that didn't dampen the energy but instead reinforced the event's theme of adaptability and resilience.

After opening remarks from NJMEP CEO Peter Connolly and fellow partners, Steve Adubato delivered an energetic keynote that had the crowd buzzing by blending humor, insight, and actionable leadership advice that perfectly set the tone for the day ahead.

Celebrating Excellence: the 2025 Award Winners

One of the most anticipated moments of 'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Day each year is the Awards Ceremony, when the spotlight turns to those shaping the state's industrial future. In front of a packed audience of peers, policymakers, and partners, this year's honorees took the stage to celebrate their contributions to New Jersey's manufacturing community.

From breakthrough innovators to long-standing leaders, these award recipients reflect the spirit of progress, collaboration, and dedication that drives the industry forward. Their work—spanning advanced production, biotechnology, and manufacturing excellence—serves as an example of what's possible when creativity and craftsmanship come together.

This year's winners included:

- ★ Manufacturer of the Year – Small | **Lobster Life Systems**
- ★ Manufacturer of the Year – Medium | **UTRS Advanced Manufacturing**
- ★ Manufacturer of the Year – Large | **Legrand, Middle Atlantic**
- ★ Leaders in Life Sciences | **Geared Power BioTech**
- ★ Rising Stars Award | **Cari August – Lightera**
- ★ Innovator of the Year | **KrellTech**

In addition, a special distinction was presented through the 'Made in NJ' Honor Roll, recognizing individuals whose leadership and advocacy have significantly advanced the state's manufacturing sector:



Attendees awaiting the introduction of the day



NJMEP CEO Peter Connolly addressing the industry



Renowned Broadcaster & Leadership Expert, Steve Adubato delivering his keynote address



The 2025 'MADE in NJ' Honor Roll Recipients



Small Manufacturer of the Year award winner Lobster Life Systems



Medium Manufacturer of the Year award winner UTRS
Advanced Manufacturing LLC



Innovator of the Year award winner KrellTech



Rising Stars award winner Cari August (Lightera)



Leaders in Life Science award winner Gearing Power BioTech



Congresswoman & NJ Gubernatorial Candidate Mikie Sherrill
speaking to the industry.

- ★ **Jim Hannan**, Partner – Withum
- ★ **Chris Emigholz**, Chief Government Affairs Officer – NJBIA
- ★ **Kelly Broznya**, State Director/CEO – NJSBDC hosted at Rutgers Business School
- ★ **Tom Bergeron**, Owner & Editor – BINJE
- ★ **Thomas J. Williams**, Resource Manager – NIST Manufacturing Extension Program
- ★ **Mark Schmit**, Division Chief – NIST Manufacturing Extension Program

As each honoree walked across the stage, the applause was both heartfelt and deafening. These awardees embody what 'MADE in NJ' represents — innovation, resilience, and the shared drive to keep New Jersey manufacturing competitive on both a national and global scale.

Two Visions, One Industry

For the first time in 'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Day history, both New Jersey gubernatorial candidates took the stage, each addressing the state's manufacturing community with their unique perspectives and plans.

The day featured Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill and former State Assemblyman Jack Ciattarelli, each participating in one-on-one sessions moderated by Dr. Benjamin Dworkin of Rowan University. These weren't scripted speeches; they were direct, candid conversations shaped by pre-submitted questions from manufacturers across the state.

Attendees played an active role in guiding the dialogue, ensuring real

industry concerns were front and center. Topics included workforce development, energy infrastructure, tax incentives, reshoring, transportation, and education — critical areas defining the path ahead for New Jersey's industrial base.

The energy in the room was palpable. Many in the audience remained afterward to meet the candidates in person, take photos, and have meaningful one-on-one exchanges. The opportunity to hear and be heard by the next potential Governor of New Jersey was not just symbolic. It was strategic. And it reinforced what this event has become: a hub for real conversations with real economic impact.

Breakouts on the Fly — and On Point

While the day's schedule shifted slightly, it didn't stop the momentum. The quick adjustment to hold breakout sessions earlier in the day went off without a hitch, thanks to the flexibility of both speakers and attendees. The result? Four dynamic, standing-room-only discussions that dove deep into the challenges and opportunities shaping today's manufacturing landscape.

Participants had the opportunity to choose from four expert-led panels, each focusing on a critical area of modern manufacturing:

- ★ **Automation & Technology Implementation** – Exploring how digital tools and smart systems are transforming production.
- ★ **Tariffs, Trade Disruptions & Supply Chain Resiliency** – Addressing global volatility and competitiveness.

- ★ **Production & Operations Best Practices** – Highlighting lean principles and throughput optimization.
- ★ **Cost-Saving Strategies for Manufacturers** – Discussing actionable ways to reduce expenses through efficiency and planning.

Each conversation left attendees with not just new partnerships, but also tangible takeaways they could apply. One of the most energizing aspects of this year's 'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Day was the presence of New Jersey's next generation of changemakers. The event floor buzzed with curiosity and engagement as students from Junior Achievement of New Jersey and the Irvington High School JROTC unit explored the world of advanced manufacturing.

These students weren't just passive spectators. They actively connected with manufacturers at exhibit booths, asked questions during breakout sessions, and even had the opportunity to meet and engage with New Jersey's gubernatorial candidates — a rare and valuable opportunity for young minds to witness leadership and advocacy in real-time.

Meanwhile, the Robotics Showcase stood as a symbol of applied STEM learning in action. Featuring talented teams from FIRST Robotics (Roxbury High School and Newton High School) and three FTC (FIRST Tech Challenge) teams represented by Robotech Educational Services, Inc., the competition gave attendees a front-row seat to the kind of ingenuity, teamwork, and technical skills that define modern manufacturing.

A Day That Proved Its Worth

This year's 'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Day proved exactly why it has become the largest manufacturing-focused event on the East Coast. The day brought together a record-breaking 1,000+ professionals, students, educators, and government leaders to celebrate, collaborate, and shape the direction of New Jersey's manufacturing future.

From opening remarks to the final conversation, the day delivered value across every corner of the venue.

In a historic first, both New Jersey gubernatorial candidates addressed the manufacturing community in individual, moderated conversations.

Attendees participated in four impactful breakout sessions where each session offered actionable takeaways and sparked connections that carried through the rest of the day.

In the bustling exhibit hall, manufacturers connected with 80+ solution providers, industry partners, and sponsors. Right outside the venue, NJMEP's Mobile Training Lab offered live tours, showcasing real-world training modules that help build the workforce pipeline.

The day also featured a high-energy robotics competition and student engagement zone, where students learned firsthand what manufacturing can offer — from careers to innovation.

And of course, the industry came together to recognize this year's top achievers with the presentation of the



Former Assemblyman & NJ Gubernatorial Candidate, Jack Citterelli speaking to the industry.



Inside look at one of the day's Breakout Sessions



Students outside NJMEP's Mobile Training Lab



Attendees networking in the 'MADE in NJ' Sponsor Room



Attendees witnessing the addresses unfold

'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Awards.

It was a celebration, a conversation, and a call to action in one. Every part of the day reinforced New Jersey's strength as a manufacturing powerhouse, and the commitment to building an even stronger tomorrow.

Thank You to Our Sponsors

None of this would have been possible without the generous support of our sponsors. These Platinum Sponsors helped power every detail of the event — from the breakout sessions to the awards and beyond:

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Gold, Silver and Blue & Bronze

Sponsors, our exhibitors, and media partners also deserve thanks for their continued belief in our mission and their role in strengthening New Jersey's manufacturing ecosystem.

Onward to 2026

MADE in NJ Manufacturing Day 2025 may be in the rearview mirror, but its impact is only just beginning to

unfold. The momentum from this year's record-breaking celebration reinforces the importance of maintaining platforms that unite, elevate, and energize New Jersey's manufacturing community.

Each year, NJMEP invests deeply in this event to ensure it evolves alongside the industry, not only as a celebration but as a tool for change, connection, and opportunity. With the support of sponsors, partners, students, and manufacturers, the 2025 edition reminded us all that New Jersey doesn't just manufacture products—it manufactures progress.

We congratulate
**Governor
Mikie Sherrill**
on her recent victory as our new
57th Governor of New Jersey.

As a former U.S. Representative, Governor Sherrill was a strong advocate for the New Jersey Manufacturing Extension Program (NJMEP) and a consistent supporter of the state's manufacturing community. We look forward to continuing our work with her and her administration to champion the needs of New Jersey's small and mid-sized manufacturers.



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New Jersey manufacturing is **Built to Last**.
Come discover some of the featured manufacturers
in this edition of *Manufacturing Matters*.

All American Poly Corp. & Brewster Washers



All American Poly Corp.

For more than 45 years, All American Poly Corp has embodied the entrepreneurial spirit of New Jersey manufacturing. Headquartered in Piscataway with multiple facilities, this family-owned company has evolved from producing simple garbage bags into a national leader in specialty plastic films—now expanding into the growing food contact plastics market.

As the company scaled to meet the demands of major multinational clients, leadership recognized that sustainable growth would depend not only on innovation, but on investing in their people. To strengthen internal leadership and standardize best practices, All American Poly partnered with NJMEP to deliver a comprehensive workforce development initiative. The training effort encompassed Lean Manufacturing, Internal Auditing, Leadership for Results, and even English as a Second Language (ESL) programs—all designed to elevate communication, accountability, and consistency across the organization.

Through this collaboration, All American Poly balanced structure with flexibility, maintaining its entrepreneurial culture while preparing for its next phase of growth.

Read the full story on page 11 to see how this New Jersey manufacturer is investing in people to fuel long-term success.

Brewster Washers

For more than a century, Brewster Washers has been synonymous with precision. Founded in 1919 and now led by fifth-generation siblings Brielle Freda Seminerio and Thomas Freda, the Fairfield-based manufacturer continues to supply high-tolerance washers, shims, and discs for defense, aerospace, and industrial clients worldwide.

When new CMMC cybersecurity compliance requirements emerged, Brewster Washers faced a critical challenge—achieving certification while maintaining lean operations. Partnering with NJMEP, the company engaged in a structured, nine-month process that guided them step-by-step through CMMC Level 2 self-compliance. The collaboration helped Brewster secure its government contracts, modernize its infrastructure, and safeguard a legacy built on trust and quality.

Now, with compliance achieved and confidence restored, Brewster Washers stands ready for its next century of excellence; proof that even the most established manufacturers can adapt, evolve, and thrive.

Dive into the full story on page 12 to learn how this fifth-generation business embraced cybersecurity to protect its future.

New Jersey manufacturing is Built to Last. These businesses and the employees that make it all possible are truly, 'Unsung Heroes.'

**Check back in *Manufacturing Matters* every quarter to see the Built to Last manufacturing list.
To be included, contact NJMEP at info@njmep.org and show the world your company is Built to Last.**

All American Poly Corp: Strengthening Human Capital to Power Sustainable Growth



SUCCESS STORY: OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Background

With over 45 years of manufacturing experience, All American Poly Corp has grown into one of the largest family-owned companies in its industry. Headquartered in Piscataway, New Jersey, with two additional facilities, the company has evolved from its origins in producing simple garbage bags into a leader in specialty plastic films. Now, with new momentum, the company is expanding into food contact plastics, positioning itself for even greater opportunities in both domestic and international markets.

At its core, All American Poly is defined by its entrepreneurial spirit, with a culture rooted in flexibility and innovation. Their success has been built on creating in-house systems and solutions that have served them well for decades. However, as the company scaled and began working with larger multinational clients, new challenges emerged. Maintaining agility while meeting the evolving expectations of major customers and industry certifications became a growing priority.

Challenge

As All American Poly expanded, the leadership team recognized that their most important asset was not just equipment or systems—but their people. While they had achieved ISO and SQF certifications and recently

implemented ERP systems, they realized that unlocking the next level of growth would require further investment in workforce development.

The entrepreneurial, fast-moving culture that had fueled their early success sometimes left the company with less formalized processes compared to larger competitors. With an increasing number of customers from the multinational space, it became clear that an elevated focus on leadership development, operational consistency, and industry-aligned practices was needed. The goal wasn't to lose the entrepreneurial spirit—but to bring structure and best practices to their workforce to meet the demands of a growing, more sophisticated customer base.

Solution

NJMEP partnered with All American Poly to design a comprehensive workforce training initiative focused on leadership, lean principles, communication, and foundational skills across all levels of the organization. The program blended technical and soft skills training to help employees develop both operational excellence and leadership capabilities, all while aligning with industry norms.

Over the course of multiple training sessions, employees participated in focused programs including Lean Manufacturing with an emphasis on 5S Workplace

FLIP ►

"We put our money where our mouth is, and we're going to be having [NJMEP] over here again. We fought hard hoping that we would get another opportunity to work with [NJMEP], so we're looking forward to doing this again—it's very beneficial for us."

Martin Parsons, Plant Manager at All American Poly Corp.

All American Poly Corp: Strengthening Human Capital to Power Sustainable Growth

(continued)

Organization, Root Cause Analysis, and Internal Auditor Training to improve quality control. Recognizing the company's need to strengthen supervisory and managerial capacity, NJMEP also delivered a series of courses on Supervisory Skills, Conflict Resolution, Time Management, and Leadership for Results, empowering frontline leaders to communicate effectively, manage performance, and foster a culture of accountability.

To support a diverse workforce, the initiative also included an English as a Second Language (ESL) program, which helped improve communication skills across the production floor, contributing to safer and more efficient operations.

All of these sessions were carefully tailored to fit All American Poly's structure, supporting the company's transition toward a more formalized, industry-standard approach without sacrificing the entrepreneurial drive that has always been part of its DNA.

Results

By investing in its people and aligning its workforce with industry best practices, All American Poly successfully positioned itself for sustainable growth while maintaining its entrepreneurial spirit. Through the comprehensive training initiative with NJMEP, the company strengthened its internal capabilities, enhanced leadership across its facilities, and improved operational consistency—all critical for meeting the expectations of its expanding customer base.

According to an independent third-party survey, All American Poly achieved the following results:

- ✓ **INCREASED SALES: \$250,000**
- ✓ **RETAINED SALES: \$1,000,000**
- ✓ **PLANT EQUIPMENT INVESTMENTS: \$3,000,000**
- ✓ **NEW P&P INVESTMENTS: \$3,000,000**

Brewster Washers: A Fifth-Generation Manufacturer Embraces Cybersecurity Compliance

Background

Brewster Washers has been a trusted name in manufacturing for over 106 years. Located in Fairfield, New Jersey, this fifth-generation family business specializes in producing precision washers, shims, and discs. Brewster's products are engineered for accuracy and durability, serving industries where precision is critical—including aerospace, defense, automotive, and industrial applications.

Today, the company is proudly led by the fifth generation—Brielle Freda Seminerio (President) and Thomas Freda (Vice President)—who carry on the family legacy of quality, reliability, and resilience. Their components are built to exacting standards and often used in high-stakes applications where precision and compliance are essential. As stewards of a century-old enterprise, Tom and Brielle have upheld Brewster's proud heritage while proactively preparing the business for the modern demands of national security and digital resilience.

Challenge

With the Department of Defense introducing new cybersecurity standards under the Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification (CMMC), Brewster Washers faced an urgent need to ensure compliance.

Tom and Brielle had recently assumed full leadership of the company following the passing of their father. Amid this significant transition, they were also responsible for safeguarding Brewster Washers' longstanding government contracts. Achieving CMMC Level 2 self-compliance became essential to continue serving defense clients and maintaining the trust built over generations.

However, navigating a complex certification process while managing a lean operation presented a serious challenge. With limited time and resources, they needed a reliable partner to guide them through compliance without disrupting day-to-day operations.



SUCCESS STORY: OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Solution

Brewster Washers turned to NJMEP to help meet the CMMC compliance requirements. Through this partnership, the company was paired with a dedicated NJMEP resource who helped simplify and manage the process from start to finish.

Over nine months, weekly virtual meetings helped Tom and Brielle align their operations with CMMC Level 2 expectations. These sessions addressed both the IT and physical security aspects of the certification, including everything from server room access control to ensuring every computer, printer, and device was labeled and secured in compliance with federal guidelines.

The process, while initially daunting, became manageable through a structured and collaborative approach. In addition to fulfilling technical requirements, Tom and Brielle gained valuable education, equipping them to understand the cybersecurity landscape and prepare for future audits.

Even after compliance was achieved, NJMEP remained a trusted resource, offering continued guidance as cybersecurity standards evolve.

Through its work with NJMEP, Brewster Washers successfully achieved CMMC Level 2 self-compliance, safeguarding their ability to continue working with government and defense clients.

Results

The project went beyond meeting regulatory requirements. It helped modernize their infrastructure, gave the leadership confidence in their internal systems, and ensured their legacy business remains positioned for future growth in the defense sector.

According to an independent third-party survey conducted after engaging with NJMEP, Brewster Washers reported the following results:

- ✓ **RETAINED SALES: \$550,000**
- ✓ **EMPLOYEES RETAINED: 9**
- ✓ **COST SAVINGS: \$230,000**
- ✓ **NEW PLANT EQUIPMENT INVESTMENTS: \$342,000**

"Honestly, we expected it to be a bit more confusing, especially since we've dealt with other certifications. But everything was super smooth, super easy. Taking on a new task like this can be overwhelming, so it was nice to have someone else help and lead us in the way of making sure we were compliant."

Brielle Freda Seminerio, President, Brewster Washers



'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturing Day 2025:

▶ Spotlighting the State's Top Manufacturers

On October 3rd, hundreds of industry leaders, educators, and policymakers gathered at iPlay America in Freehold to celebrate excellence during the 'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturing Day Awards Ceremony — a hallmark moment that honors the businesses and individuals shaping the state's manufacturing landscape.

Each year, these awards serve as a testament to the innovation, resilience, and collaboration that define New Jersey manufacturing. The Manufacturer of the Year Awards recognize excellence across small, medium, and large business categories — celebrating companies that demonstrate exceptional performance, growth, and community impact.

Beyond these, several special awards highlight the diverse strengths that power the industry forward. The Rising Star Award honors emerging women leaders and professionals making a notable impact in their manufacturing careers. The Innovator of the Year Award celebrates companies driving progress through groundbreaking technology and forward-thinking solutions. The Leaders in Life Sciences Award recognizes manufacturers advancing the life sciences sector through precision, research, and innovation.

Together, these finalists exemplify the dedication and creativity that fuel New Jersey's manufacturing community. The following pages spotlight each honoree, a reflection of the state's unwavering commitment to progress and people.

'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturer of the Year Small | 50 or Less Employees



Modern Line Furniture Inc.



Modern Line Furniture Inc., based in Hamilton, NJ, is a leading manufacturer of commercial-grade modular furniture serving the hospitality, commercial, and residential industries. The company is distinguished by its rapid production timelines, customizable American-made products, and vertically integrated operations that ensure accountability and superior quality. Through its 80,000 sq. ft. facility, Modern Line combines craftsmanship with advanced CNC and digital cutting technologies to streamline production and reduce waste. The company's collaborative culture and focus on workforce development drive innovation and consistent customer satisfaction across its expanding national footprint.



Web-Cote Industries



Web-Cote Industries has transformed under new ownership into a thriving, woman-owned manufacturing company serving the pest control industry. After 17 years with the company, the new owner took the helm and drove over 14% revenue growth in consecutive years. Through initiatives like the Teach Us Tuesday educational series and a partnership with Women in Pest Control, Web-Cote expanded its reach and reinforced its commitment to inclusion and education. The company continues to invest in capital equipment, facility expansion, and employee benefits to support a people-first workplace, earning recognition as a certified Women Business Enterprise in New Jersey.





'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturer of the Year Small | 50 or Less Employees



Old Hickory BBQ

Hickory Industries, Inc., the maker of Old Hickory Bar-B-Q Machines, is a veteran- and family-owned business proudly manufacturing in North Bergen, NJ, since 1946. Known for its durable, competition-quality ovens and rotisseries, Old Hickory combines heritage craftsmanship with modern technology. Collaborating with BBQ Hall-of-Famer Myron Mixon, the company designs innovative, high-performance cooking equipment trusted by restaurants and pitmasters nationwide. Continuous improvement through lean manufacturing and digital fabrication keeps operations efficient while preserving the reliability and quality that defines the Old Hickory name.



Triad RF Systems Inc.

Triad RF Systems designs and manufactures advanced RF and microwave amplifiers, subsystems, and communication solutions for defense, aerospace, and satellite industries. Through Lean Six Sigma practices and integrated digital systems, Triad has doubled manufacturing throughput and reduced testing time by 50%. Its groundbreaking Triad High Power Radio (THPR) unites amplifier and radio technologies, setting new standards for performance and efficiency. The company's culture of continuous improvement, employee empowerment, and precision engineering has positioned Triad RF as a trusted leader in mission-critical wireless communications.



'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturer of the Year

Small | 50 or Less Employees



GP Precision



GP Precision is a New Jersey-based manufacturer driven by integrity, innovation, and customer satisfaction. ISO 9001:2015 certified and has maintained a 99.32% on-time delivery rate since 2019, GP Precision continues to advance through investments in CNC fiber laser and welding technology. The company cultivates internal talent through robust in-house training programs that address the skilled labor gap while partnering with local vendors to strengthen the regional supply chain. With a focus on quality, reliability, and community collaboration, GP Precision exemplifies operational excellence and enduring customer trust.



Lobster Life Systems, Inc.



For more than a decade, Lobster Life Systems has been the nation's only full-service lobster tank manufacturer, delivering cutting-edge aquatic systems to supermarkets and seafood suppliers across North America. Under the leadership of Tom Olsen, the company achieved 16% year-over-year growth in 2024 and continues to expand through innovations like the Shellfish Spa and the White Glove Preventive Maintenance Program. With a foundation built on faith, family, and integrity, Lobster Life Systems invests heavily in its workforce, equipment, and partnerships — ensuring consistent quality, reliability, and growth in a unique niche market.





'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturer of the Year

Medium

 | 51 to 250 Employees

ACE Electronics Defense Systems

For nearly 50 years, ACE Electronics has stood as a trusted New Jersey-based manufacturer known for precision, reliability, and a deep commitment to people. Specializing in custom manufacturing strategies and high-quality electronic components, ACE continues to grow through innovation and transparency. Recent investments in 3D scanning, printing, and automation have strengthened their operations. Beyond manufacturing excellence, ACE supports the broader community through donations, industry leadership, and initiatives such as sponsoring service dogs for veterans.



Virtex



Since 1971, Virtex has delivered Tier 1 electronic manufacturing services across the Aerospace, Defense, Medical, and Industrial sectors. Guided by its core principles—Performance, Precision, and Integrity—the company provides vertically integrated solutions that support products from concept to completion. Its New Jersey site has earned multiple internal honors, including the Overall Site Performance, Strongest Growth, and People Awards, recognizing operational achievement and a strong workplace culture. Backed by a “ONE Virtex” philosophy, the team’s commitment to collaboration and continuous improvement continues to set the standard for high-reliability manufacturing.



'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturer of the Year

Medium | 51 to 250 Employees



LPS Industries, LLC



Established in 1959, LPS Industries, LLC manufactures flexible packaging and specialty products from its 250,000-square-foot facility in Moonachie, New Jersey. With products shipped worldwide, the company prides itself on maintaining full domestic production and a "customer-first" philosophy championed by CEO Madeleine Robinson. LPS has been ISO 9001 certified for more than 15 years and continues to integrate sustainability and innovation across operations, earning the CIANJ Innovator's Award for Sustainable Practices in Manufacturing. LPS Industries exemplifies consistency, leadership, and environmental responsibility in modern manufacturing.



UTRS Advanced Manufacturing LLC



Formed in 2023, UTRS Advanced Manufacturing LLC builds on decades of experience providing advanced manufacturing and prototyping services for both public and private sectors. Operating across three New Jersey facilities, the company combines over 100 years of history through its acquisitions of Gaum Inc. and Hunter Manufacturing Services. With ISO 9001:2015 and AS9100D certifications, UTRS leads in machining, rapid prototyping, and precision production for clients in defense, aerospace, automotive, and pharmaceutical industries. Its partnership-driven workforce development initiatives—including co-op programs with local schools and apprenticeship pathways—reflect a commitment to cultivating New Jersey's next generation of manufacturing talent.





'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturer of the Year

Large | 251 or more Employees



Tilcon NY

Tilcon NY is a leading manufacturer and supplier of building materials serving the New York metro and Northern New Jersey markets. Guided by its founding principles of People, Character, Performance, and Innovation, the company has achieved five consecutive years of growth and four record-breaking years of profitability. Tilcon's 24/7 operations support critical infrastructure projects, including emergency roadway repairs such as the Route 80 "Sink Hole" restoration. With ongoing investments in automation, safety, and sustainability, Tilcon continues to set industry benchmarks while prioritizing workforce development and community engagement.



Holt Logistics



Holt Logistics is a vertically integrated logistics leader providing end-to-end solutions that connect vessels to markets through port operations, inspection, cold storage, and delivery. The company's innovation-driven model combines automation, data analytics, and real-time tracking to maximize efficiency and transparency across the supply chain. A structured 90-day onboarding program and partnerships with universities and workforce organizations, including NJMEP, ensure continuous employee growth and leadership development. By aligning technology with a people-first philosophy, Holt Logistics continues to strengthen its position as a trusted name in international logistics and trade.



'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturer of the Year

Large

 | 251 or more
Employees

Hikma Pharmaceuticals



Hikma Pharmaceuticals, one of the top 10 generic pharmaceutical manufacturers in the U.S., operates key production and R&D facilities in Cherry Hill, NJ, as part of its nationwide network. With 2024 revenues reaching \$3.16 billion, Hikma's success is driven by its dual focus on operational excellence and social responsibility. Through its "America Leans on Hikma" initiative, the company is investing \$1 billion through 2030 to expand domestic manufacturing capacity for sterile injectables and critical medicines. Partnering with NJMEP and the New Jersey Department of Labor, Hikma continues to strengthen its workforce, reinforce healthcare supply chain resilience, and bolster New Jersey's role in the life sciences sector.



Legrand (Middle Atlantic)



Legrand's Middle Atlantic division leads with a people-first culture and an unyielding focus on safety, quality, and innovation. Through its "Legrand Way" manufacturing philosophy, the company drives continuous improvement across all KPIs—Safety, Quality, Delivery, and Cost—while integrating Industry 4.0 technologies such as robotics and AI-driven process monitoring. The company's Female Development Program in Metal Fabrication has opened doors for women to excel in technical roles traditionally underrepresented in manufacturing. With a commitment to inclusion and advanced manufacturing excellence, Legrand continues to strengthen New Jersey's industrial landscape and inspire workforce progress.





'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturer of the Year Innovation

Krell Technologies



Krell Technologies, headquartered in Neptune City and led by President Al Cheswick, has been advancing photonics manufacturing innovation for over 30 years. Its flagship NOVA™ polishing system and recent precision-shaping upgrades have set new standards in the production of optical and photonic components used across aerospace, biotech, and defense industries. By combining in-house engineering, lean manufacturing, and continuous R&D supported by New Jersey innovation programs, KrellTech exemplifies the power of local ingenuity with global impact. The company's partnerships with schools and organizations statewide reinforce its commitment to advancing STEM education and workforce development in New Jersey.



Zarbeco LLC



For over 25 years, Zarbeco LLC has been pioneering imaging software and optical technology under the leadership of founder David Zweig. The company's Video Toolbox Ultra software introduced the innovative "live color space" feature—enabling users to view multiple color spaces simultaneously, a breakthrough for forensic document examiners and art conservators. Supported by David's decades of optical design expertise and multiple patents, Zarbeco's accessible, budget-minded tools have brought laboratory-grade imaging technology to diverse industries. Through continuous improvement and mentorship, the company remains a trusted innovator in precision imaging and software design.



'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturer of the Year Innovation



Triad RF Systems Inc.



Triad RF Systems continues to push the limits of RF and wireless manufacturing through smart engineering and advanced testing innovation. The company developed an integrated suite of automated Micro, Mini, and Giga Test Racks that streamline validation, improve accuracy, and cut testing time by 50%. Alongside proprietary digital tools like the Triad Production Tracking and QC & Closure apps, these innovations have strengthened internal efficiency and supplier performance across the manufacturing ecosystem. Triad's culture of collaboration, accountability, and continuous improvement has solidified its position as a technology leader and champion of New Jersey's high-tech manufacturing community.



Bestwork Industries for the Blind



Bestwork Industries for the Blind continues to redefine inclusive manufacturing by creating meaningful employment opportunities for individuals who are blind or visually impaired. With locations in Cherry Hill, Montclair, and Roselle, Bestwork has developed scalable and portable kitting, packaging, and assembly processes adaptable to a variety of client needs. Their innovative workflows empower employees through accessible technology and flexible design, ensuring productivity without compromising quality. By blending mission-driven leadership with operational excellence, Bestwork serves as a benchmark for how manufacturing innovation can transform lives and communities.





'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturer of the Year Life Science

Hikma Pharmaceuticals



Hikma Pharmaceuticals is a global leader in the development and manufacturing of essential medicines, with its Cherry Hill, NJ facility serving as a cornerstone of U.S. operations. Through its America Leans on Hikma initiative, the company is investing \$1 billion through 2030 to expand domestic manufacturing capacity for sterile injectables and critical drugs, ensuring a stronger, more resilient healthcare supply chain. As one of the nation's top 10 generic pharmaceutical companies, Hikma exemplifies operational excellence, social responsibility, and workforce empowerment—partnering with NJMEP and the New Jersey Department of Labor to provide targeted training that elevates safety and innovation.



Case Medical



Case Medical, based in Bloomfield, NJ, is a pioneer in instrument processing and infection prevention technology. Operating under a "Design to Destination" model, the company develops and manufactures its products entirely in-house, using locally sourced materials and advanced digital systems. A seven-time U.S. EPA Safer Choice Partner of the Year, Case Medical integrates sustainability, safety, and innovation into every process—from its SteriTite universal container system to its AI-driven CaseTrak360 ERP software. With strong partnerships at NJIT, Rutgers, and NJMEP, the company continues to set benchmarks for eco-conscious, high-quality manufacturing in the medical device sector.



'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturer of the Year Life Science



Jewel Precision



With 40 years of expertise, Jewel Precision is a leading manufacturer of sterilization trays and cases, proudly supporting hospitals and healthcare providers nationwide. The company continues to innovate through automation and advanced technologies such as robotic arms, anodization systems, and CNC milling. By maintaining close relationships with New Jersey vendors and transitioning to a fully paperless, LAN-based system, Jewel Precision strengthens efficiency and sustainability. Rooted in a culture that values people as much as progress, the company fosters a sense of community and pride that drives quality and consistency across its operations.



Geared Power BioTech Division



Geared Power BioTech's BioGuard UVC™s redefining infection prevention with a pathogen-agnostic Class II medical device that neutralizes airborne pathogens in real time. Utilizing a patented helical UV chamber design, the device offers a revolutionary, filter-free approach to respiratory infection control. In 2025, BioGuard UVC™ was named "The Coolest Thing Made in New Jersey," underscoring its innovation and public health potential. Led by CEO Gary Kellstrom Jr., Geared Power combines Six Sigma precision with cutting-edge research to expand manufacturing partnerships and workforce opportunities across the state—positioning the company as a future leader in healthcare technology and domestic production.





2025 *Rising Star in* **MANUFACTURING**



Jackie Luciano | Vice President, ZAGO Manufacturing

With 18 years at ZAGO Manufacturing, Jackie Luciano has risen from marketing leadership to Vice President, overseeing corporate strategy and operations. Holding an Executive MBA in Finance and a Lean Six Sigma Green Belt, she combines business acumen with process improvement expertise. Jackie is a passionate advocate for women in leadership and manufacturing, working closely with schools and community organizations to mentor and inspire the next generation of industry professionals. Her dedication to education, empowerment, and operational excellence continues to elevate both ZAGO and the broader manufacturing community.



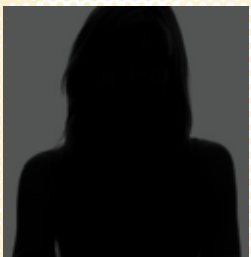
Colleen Shea | Vice President of Sales, Pen Company of America

As Vice President of Sales at Pen Company of America, Colleen Shea has played a pivotal role in revitalizing a legacy brand and championing American-made products in an industry largely moved overseas. Her visionary leadership helped transform the company into a thriving manufacturer and a symbol of resilience in U.S. production. A sought-after speaker and advocate for women in manufacturing, Colleen shares her expertise nationwide, inspiring others to lead with innovation, confidence, and purpose. Her story is a testament to perseverance, family legacy, and an unwavering belief in the power of domestic manufacturing.



Yana Katliarova | Managing Partner, Modern Line Furniture

As a key leader at Modern Line Furniture, Yana Katliarova drives operational excellence, customer success, and production coordination with precision and creativity. Her leadership bridges design, logistics, and client relations—ensuring seamless project execution for national hospitality brands. Yana's influence extends into workforce development, where she has built onboarding and training systems that empower employees and encourage long-term growth. Known for her calm professionalism and people-first mindset, Yana exemplifies the next generation of manufacturing leadership—strategic, adaptive, and deeply invested in her team's success.



Melissa Graziano | Controller, Jewel Precision

At Jewel Precision, Melissa Graziano has been instrumental in advancing the company's reputation for quality and innovation in sterilization tray and case manufacturing. Her leadership reflects a balance of technological progress and people-centered management, helping implement new automation systems while maintaining a strong sense of community and collaboration. Melissa's efforts in onboarding, education, and workforce engagement have strengthened employee retention and productivity, creating a culture of shared pride and purpose. Her work highlights the profound role that leadership and compassion play in driving sustainable growth in manufacturing.



Cari August | Operations Manager, Lightera

As an operations manager with a Ph.D. in Materials Science and Engineering, Cari August brings a rare blend of technical expertise and people-focused leadership to the manufacturing industry. She is recognized for her dynamic approach to process improvement, leveraging Lean Manufacturing and Six Sigma methodologies to optimize efficiency and engagement. Beyond her technical achievements, Cari is deeply committed to mentorship—empowering colleagues, elevating voices across teams, and fostering pathways for women entering manufacturing careers. Her leadership style is defined by collaboration, enthusiasm, and a passion for continuous learning.

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MEET THE WINNERS

of the 2025 'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Day Awards

New Jersey's Top Manufacturers & Industry Leaders Recognized for Excellence

The New Jersey Manufacturing Extension Program, Inc. (NJMEP) proudly announced the winners of the 2025 'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Day Awards, revealed during a packed celebration at iPlay America in Freehold, New Jersey.

As the largest manufacturing networking event in the state, 'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Day brings together manufacturers, industry stakeholders, students, educators, and legislators for a day of recognition, inspiration, and industry advocacy. This year's event once again raised the bar with record attendance, moderated sessions with both gubernatorial candidates, dynamic exhibits, and a keynote address by award-winning broadcaster and business leader Steve Adubato.

At the heart of the event is the annual 'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Day Awards Ceremony, where manufacturers of all sizes, rising stars, and industry pioneers are recognized for their outstanding contributions to New Jersey's manufacturing economy.

This year's award winners were unveiled in the following categories:

- ★ Manufacturer of the Year – Small | **Lobster Life Systems**
- ★ Manufacturer of the Year – Medium | **UTRS Advanced Manufacturing**
- ★ Manufacturer of the Year – Large | **Legrand, Middle Atlantic**
- ★ Leaders in Life Sciences | **Geared Power Biotech**
- ★ Rising Stars Award | **Cari August – Lightera**
- ★ Innovator of the Year | **KrellTech**

"These award winners represent the very best of New Jersey manufacturing," said Peter Connolly, CEO of NJMEP. "From cutting-edge innovation to workforce excellence, each honoree reflects the resilience and leadership that keeps New Jersey's economy moving forward."

The award winners were selected from a competitive group of finalists, each showcasing exceptional performance in their category and a shared commitment to advancing New Jersey's manufacturing landscape.

An Early Glimpse Into 2026

The 'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Day tradition will continue next October, where once again, manufacturers from across the state will have the opportunity to connect, showcase their work, and be recognized for excellence in the industry. Nominations for the 2026 awards will open in the spring, and NJMEP encourages all manufacturers—from startups to seasoned operations—to participate in the process.

A special thank-you to our Platinum Sponsors for their incredible support and commitment to New Jersey manufacturing:

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- ★ **Avison Young**
- ★ **Crowe**
- ★ **Grassi**
- ★ **Healthcare Institute of NJ (HINJ)**
- ★ **NJ Advance Media**
- ★ **NJ Business & Industry Association (NJBIA)**
- ★ **NJ Economic Development Authority (NJEDA)**
- ★ **Porzio Bromberg & Newman**
- ★ **Spencer Savings Bank**
- ★ **Withum**



CONGRATULATIONS

to the 2025 'Manufacturers of the Year'



MANUFACTURER OF THE YEAR
Small (50 or less employees)



MANUFACTURER OF THE YEAR
Medium (between 51 and 250 employees)



MANUFACTURER OF THE YEAR
Large (251 employees or more)



INNOVATOR OF THE YEAR



LEADER IN LIFE SCIENCES

Cari August



▶ CELEBRATING

Those Who Champion New Jersey Manufacturing

Recognizing the 2025 Manufacturing Honor Roll Recipients

Each year, 'MADE in New Jersey' Manufacturing Day shines a well-deserved spotlight on the people who make this industry exceptional—not only those producing world-class products but also the individuals working tirelessly behind the scenes to strengthen the manufacturing community as a whole.

The Manufacturing Honor Roll celebrates those who have gone above and beyond to advance manufacturing in New Jersey. These honorees are the educators, advocates, public officials, and business leaders who continuously lend their voices, time, and expertise to ensure that manufacturing remains a driving force in our state's economy. Their contributions go far beyond their own organizations; they inspire partnerships, promote workforce opportunities, and help build the foundation for sustainable industry growth.

In today's business climate, where innovation moves quickly and challenges emerge overnight, collaboration and advocacy have never been more vital. The individuals recognized this year have stood up for manufacturers at every level, helping businesses navigate new technologies, strengthen supply chains, address workforce needs, and raise public awareness of the industry's importance to New Jersey's economic and social well-being.

The impact of manufacturing can be felt in every corner of the Garden State, from the products made locally to the communities and careers they sustain. The 2025 Manufacturing Honor Roll recipients exemplify the dedication and passion that keep this sector moving forward. Their leadership ensures that manufacturing continues to thrive not just as an industry, but as a proud part of New Jersey's identity.

On behalf of the entire manufacturing community, NJMEP extends its deepest appreciation to all who continue to stand up for, invest in, and celebrate 'MADE in New Jersey' manufacturing.

'MADE IN NEW JERSEY' MANUFACTURING DAY

CONGRATULATIONS to the 2025 Manufacturing Honor Roll



Tom Bergeron
Owner, Editor - BINJE



Kelly Brozyna
State Director/CEO NJSBDC hosted
at Rutgers Business School



Jim Hannan
Partner - Withum



Chris Emigholz
Chief Government Affairs
Officer - NJBIA



Thomas J. Williams
Resource Manager - NIST
Manufacturing Extension Program



Mark Schmit
Division Chief - NIST Manufacturing
Extension Program



At the Crossroads of Policy & Industry: Gubernatorial Candidates Address NJ Manufacturing

At the 13th annual 'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Day, the stakes were high — not just for the event, which broke attendance records and buzzed with energy, but for the future of the industry itself. For the first time in the event's history, New Jersey's manufacturing community had the opportunity to hear directly from both gubernatorial candidates: **Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill and former State Assemblyman Jack Ciattarelli.**

Moderated by Dr. Benjamin Dworkin of Rowan University, these fireside chat-style interviews brought meaningful attention to the future of workforce development, business incentives, infrastructure, and innovation in manufacturing.

This rare, side-by-side platform emphasized that no matter the party affiliation, manufacturing remains a bipartisan priority in New Jersey. Both candidates showcased their vision and commitment to ensuring the industry thrives; a promising sign for the thousands of manufacturers and workers that power the state's economy.

Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill: Strengthening Workforce and Cutting Barriers

Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill, a Navy veteran and former federal prosecutor, brought a focused and practical tone to her remarks. She emphasized that the state's long-term competitiveness depends on ensuring its workforce keeps pace with innovation and that opportunity remains accessible across every sector.



"Having this skilled, high-end workforce in New Jersey is so critical to our economy here. We run one of the most high-end workforces in the nation... And so, with the workforce, I think we need to continue to drive in all opportunities because the workforce is going to be changing."

– **Mikie Sherrill**

Sherrill also acknowledged that the manufacturing community faces ongoing challenges with costs and bureaucracy, and she pledged to take direct action to improve the business climate.



"Permitting and approvals for new facilities take too long. Costs and fees that you pay are too high. And your energy costs are now skyrocketing. That's unacceptable. And that's what I'm going to change as governor."

– **Mikie Sherrill**

Her remarks reflected a vision for a more agile, responsive New Jersey — one that reduces red tape, empowers employers, and equips workers with the skills needed to drive lasting growth

Jack Ciattarelli: Building a Pro-Business Foundation

Former State Assemblyman Jack Ciattarelli, a longtime entrepreneur, spoke with conviction about restoring New Jersey's reputation as a state that values its business community. His message was clear: government must be an ally, not an obstacle, for manufacturers striving to grow and compete.

"We're the only state government in the country that doesn't have a Department of Commerce. We're going to have a Department of Commerce under Governor Ciattarelli ... These state agencies will not be a police state or a collection agency or delay you. They will be partners."

– **Jack Ciattarelli**



Ciattarelli also outlined a clear plan to strengthen New Jersey's competitiveness by modernizing its tax structure and promoting predictable conditions for business growth.

"I'm going to try like hell, and working in partnership with the legislature, to cut our business tax from the highest in the nation — eleven and a half — down to five over a five-year period. That's exactly what they're doing in Pennsylvania."

– **Jack Ciattarelli**

His remarks underscored his commitment to pragmatic, pro-growth reforms — positioning manufacturing as a cornerstone of New Jersey's economic revitalization.



A Unified Focus on Manufacturing's Future

The presence of both candidates at 'MADE in NJ' Manufacturing Day underscored a critical truth: New Jersey's manufacturing community is being heard.

Each speaker brought a unique approach and perspective to the conversation, but both were united in one key area — manufacturing is essential to New Jersey's future, and the state's next governor must prioritize policies that support its success.

We are grateful to Congresswoman Sherrill and Mr. Ciattarelli

for lending their time and insights to the event. Their willingness to engage directly with industry leaders is a clear demonstration that manufacturing matters and that bipartisan support will play a central role in its continued growth.



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Inspiring the Next Generation: Future Makers & Creators Tour Continues Its Mission in 2025

School is back in session, and that means one of New Jersey's most impactful student initiatives is hitting the road once again: the Future Makers & Creators Tour. As classrooms refill and hallways buzz with energy, so too does the opportunity to show the next generation what it means to make something meaningful right here in the Garden State.

This year, we're hitting the gas, picking up where we left off after a wildly successful tour last school year. The goal? Keep that momentum going and reach even more students across even more counties. Because when students can see, touch, and interact with real-world manufacturing, it changes how they see their own potential.

Last Year's Momentum, This Year's Mission

From Trenton to Cape May and everywhere in between, the 2024–2025 school year saw the Future Makers & Creators Tour make a serious impact. Thousands of students across New Jersey had the chance to meet with local manufacturers, explore career pathways, and experience hands-on demonstrations in advanced manufacturing technologies through our mobile training lab.

This year, we're not just repeating that success—we're building on it. More counties. More schools. More real-life exposure to what a career in modern manufacturing actually looks like. These moments spark inspiration and set students on a path that might never have occurred to them otherwise.

What's in the Tour?

This isn't your typical school fair. The Future Makers & Creators Tour brings together industry, education, and opportunity under one roof with the help of our mobile advanced manufacturing training lab.

At each stop, students can:

- ✓ **Interact with real equipment such as 3D printers, robotic arms, CNC mills, and AR welding simulators**
- ✓ **Speak directly with manufacturers, engineers, and technologists**
- ✓ **Learn how today's manufacturing is driven by innovation, precision, and purpose**
- ✓ **Discover education and training paths that can lead directly into manufacturing careers**

Whether students are hands-on builders, tech-savvy creators, or still figuring things out, the Tour provides a low-pressure, high-energy space to explore.

Powered by Purpose: NJMEP + NJEDA

The Future Makers & Creators Tour is powered in part by a shared mission between NJMEP and the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA)—a mission to develop a robust, local talent pipeline that's ready to support and sustain New Jersey's manufacturing economy.

This partnership ensures the tour isn't just an awareness campaign, it's an actionable initiative that closes workforce gaps by inspiring the very people who will one day fill those critical roles. Together, NJMEP and NJEDA are providing young minds with exposure to well-paying, stable careers they may have never known existed, right in their own communities.

Looking Ahead: Where We're Headed Next

With stops already scheduled across multiple counties this school year, the tour is just getting started. And there's room to grow—more schools, more students, and more manufacturers getting involved means a stronger, more prepared workforce down the line.

Educators and school administrators: If you'd like to bring the Future Makers & Creators Tour to your school, now is the time to reach out.

Manufacturers: If you want to meet the potential future workforce of tomorrow face to face, join us at one of the upcoming stops and get involved in inspiring the next generation of talent.

Let's Build the Future, Together

New Jersey's manufacturing industry isn't going anywhere, but it is evolving. To stay strong, it needs a workforce that's curious, capable, and inspired. The Future Makers & Creators Tour is helping make that happen, one school at a time.



To learn more or see where the tour is heading next, visit: WWW.NJMEP.ORG/MAKERSANDCREATORS

Reviving Industry: The Role of Advertising in NJ's Manufacturing Renaissance

New Jersey's manufacturing legacy runs deep. From the roaring furnaces of Paterson to the bustling pharmaceutical labs of the 20th century, the Garden State has long stood at the intersection of industrial might and innovation. Yet in recent decades, offshoring, automation, and shifting global economics saw many of those plants shuttered and jobs disappear. A once-proud sector, manufacturing came to be viewed by some as a relic, overshadowed by corporate campuses and the digital revolution. Today, however, a different story is unfolding. Fueled by advanced technologies, global trade shifts, and strategic workforce development, New Jersey is experiencing a manufacturing resurgence. At the heart of this revival is a renewed need to tell the industry's story in a compelling, modern way. Advertising, often underestimated in the manufacturing space, can be a key driver in rebranding manufacturing, attracting new talent, and connecting communities to the products made in their backyard.

The Current State of Manufacturing in New Jersey

According to the 2025 NJMEP Industry Report, New Jersey is home to 11,055 manufacturing establishments employing approximately 378,500 workers. The industry contributes \$64.38 billion annually to the state's GDP, making it one of New Jersey's largest economic drivers. The manufacturing sector now accounts for nearly 9.7% of all jobs in the state, an encouraging sign of resilience and growth.

Core sectors include pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, medical devices, aerospace, industrial machinery, and food manufacturing. These are not just assembly-line jobs, they require advanced degrees, technical certifications, and hands-on experience with cutting-edge tools like automation software and AI-integrated systems.

New Jersey also benefits from a robust logistics ecosystem. Its location in the heart of the Northeast Corridor, combined with one of the busiest ports on the East Coast, allows manufacturers to access both domestic and global markets with ease. In 2024, the state recorded \$36.58 billion in manufacturing exports, a 2.17% year-over-year increase, underscoring the global competitiveness of its industrial base. Top trade partners include Canada, Mexico, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and China.

Many of these gains are powered by smart manufacturing practices. The adoption of Industry 4.0 tools such as Internet of Things (IoT), digital twins, and robotics has allowed even mid-size manufacturers to modernize operations, reduce waste, and improve product quality. State-sponsored innovation grants and workforce training programs have also enabled small firms to integrate these technologies and remain competitive.

Challenges Facing the Manufacturing Industry

Despite these advances, the industry still grapples with multiple challenges. Chief among them is the persistent shortage of skilled labor. According to NJMEP, the talent gap remains one of the most cited concerns among manufacturers. Aging workforces, lack of vocational training in high schools, and parental pressure to pursue four-year college degrees over trades have contributed to a shrinking pipeline of qualified candidates.

Efforts to reverse this trend are underway. Community colleges, such as Middlesex College and County College of Morris, now offer stackable credentials and hands-on apprenticeships aligned with industry needs. High school career and technical education (CTE) programs are also receiving renewed investment. Still, there is a significant cultural hurdle: manufacturing must be seen not as a fallback, but as a forward-facing, desirable career path.

Supply chain instability remains another key concern. While many companies have begun reshoring production or diversifying their

supplier base, the logistical ripple effects of COVID-19 and ongoing geopolitical tensions continue to affect costs and timelines. Manufacturers increasingly cite the need for local sourcing and rapid adaptability as strategic imperatives—factors that New Jersey is well-positioned to capitalize on given its infrastructure.

Lastly, image is everything. Decades of decline left a public perception of manufacturing as dirty, dangerous, and dead-end. This narrative couldn't be further from the truth. Yet perception lags behind reality, making targeted storytelling through advertising essential to attracting both talent and investment.

The Role of Advertising in Manufacturing

Advertising is more than just glossy product placement; it's a strategic lever for economic and workforce development. By showcasing the modern face of manufacturing, advertising helps bridge the gap between what the public believes and what the industry actually offers.

Effective campaigns highlight diversity in roles, from data analysts optimizing production through predictive modeling, to robotic technicians maintaining AI-driven equipment. Imagery matters: showing sleek facilities, clean rooms, high-tech labs, and content and engaged employees demystifies the outdated image of grease-stained factories.

The 'Made in New Jersey' campaign, powered by NJMEP, serves to lift the profile of local manufacturers. Using video spotlights, social media, and

employer branding, the campaign puts a human face on the industry. Similarly, Manufacturing Day events and plant tours provide firsthand experience that often reshapes student and parent perceptions.

Nationally, the Manufacturing Institute's 'Creators Wanted' campaign has been a blueprint for how industry-wide branding can attract the next generation. The campaign includes an immersive tour, online resources, and engaging events to educate students, parents, and emerging workers about the rewarding opportunities available in manufacturing.

Advertising doesn't work in a vacuum. The most effective campaigns are backed by data and integrated into employer branding, recruitment, public relations, and even legislative advocacy. For example, aligning digital marketing efforts with career fair outreach or partnering with influencers in STEM education creates a multi-touch strategy that reinforces the message across platforms.

New Jersey's manufacturing sector is not merely rebounding, it's reinventing itself. The fusion of traditional industry strengths with modern innovation has created a dynamic, future-ready ecosystem. However, to sustain and accelerate this momentum, the narrative surrounding manufacturing must continue to evolve. Advertising is the storytelling engine of this movement.

By investing in creative, strategic, compelling and engaging advertising, New Jersey can reclaim its place as a national model for 21st-century manufacturing. The right message can

inspire a student to pursue mechatronics, a parent to encourage a trade-school path, or a policymaker to prioritize infrastructure investment. In that sense, every billboard, social ad, and video story is not just marketing, it's economic development in motion.

An Opportunity for New Jersey Manufacturing Businesses

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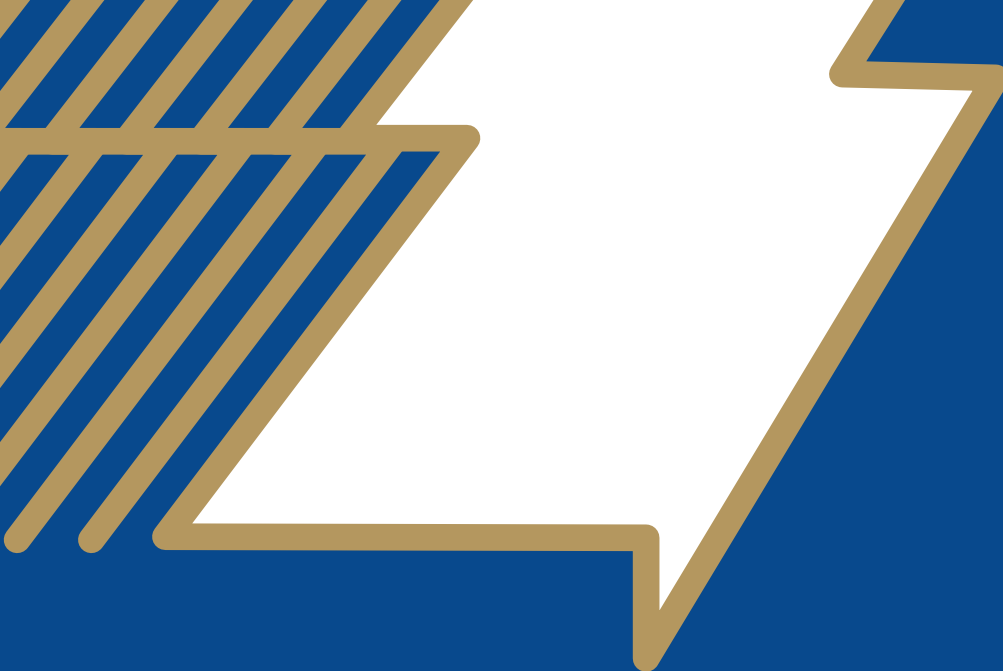
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Manufacturing Momentum: How South Jersey Is Leading the Way

By Southern New Jersey
Development Council

Manufacturing has long been a cornerstone of South Jersey's economic foundation, and today it is experiencing a wave of new opportunities and innovations that are reshaping the region's future. With its prime location, highly skilled workforce, and strong transportation networks, South Jersey is uniquely positioned to attract investment and strengthen its role as a hub for advanced manufacturing. The Southern New Jersey Development Council plays a pivotal role in promoting these developments, helping to connect manufacturers with local resources, as well as policymakers and community leaders who are invested in driving regional growth.

One of the greatest advantages Southern New Jersey has is its geographic position. Located within a short distance to Philadelphia, New York City, and Washington D.C., the South Jersey region provides access to some of the largest consumer markets in the country. Its network of highways, rail connections, and proximity to ports in Camden, Paulsboro and Salem ensures efficient movement of goods both domestically and globally. This logistical connectivity has made the region attractive for both traditional manufacturing companies and advanced sectors requiring rapid supply chain responsiveness.

South Jersey's manufacturing sector continues to build on its strong foundations in food processing, chemicals, and consumer goods while expanding into industries that reflect global economic trends. Companies like Vineland-based F&S Produce and Stanker & Galetto's ongoing development of manufacturing and cold storage facilities in Cumberland County highlight the region's strength in food-related manufacturing and logistics. Beyond these areas, South Jersey is advancing in high-tech fields driven by global trends. The National Aerospace Research and Technology Park in Atlantic County drives innovation in aerospace and defense manufacturing, while Rowan University's CREATES program at the South Jersey Technology Park fosters collaboration in advanced infrastructure engineering. Together, these developments showcase a diverse, forward-looking manufacturing economy that blends heritage industries with advanced technologies.

In healthcare, institutions such as Cooper University Health Care and Virtua Health, alongside research

hubs like the Coriell Institute, Camden Cancer Research Center, the Camden Health Sciences Campus and Rowan University's biomedical programs have made the region a prime location for medical research and development, combining cutting-edge innovation with a skilled talent pipeline. This dynamic ecosystem of precision manufacturing, state-of-the-art facilities, and specialized training positions South Jersey as a premier destination for medical device production and pharmaceutical manufacturing, fueling economic growth and cementing its reputation as a center of excellence in life sciences.

Supporting this growth is a strong network of vocational schools and apprenticeship programs that directly prepare students for careers in manufacturing. Rowan College of South Jersey has expanded its training facilities and programs to equip learners with advanced technical skills, while Camden County Technical Schools and Camden County College are partnering with employers to deliver hands-on workforce training supported by NJEDA investment. In Salem County, Salem Community College and the Salem County Vocational Technical Schools (SCVTS) are creating career pathways that combine classroom instruction with real-world apprenticeship experience, ensuring both high school students and adult learners are ready to step into high-demand manufacturing jobs.

Looking ahead

South Jersey's manufacturing sector is poised for continued growth.

By embracing innovation, leveraging its geographic advantages, and strengthening partnerships between industry, education, and government, the region is laying the groundwork for a resilient and prosperous future. With the Southern New Jersey Development Council at the forefront of these efforts, manufacturing in South Jersey remains not only a proud legacy but also a dynamic driver of progress.



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