

**GCTC**

# Alliance helps area manufacturers improve the bottom line

Gordon Cooper Technology Center Manufacturing Extension Agent Clarence Prevost draws on a variety of life experiences to help local manufacturers improve the bottom line.

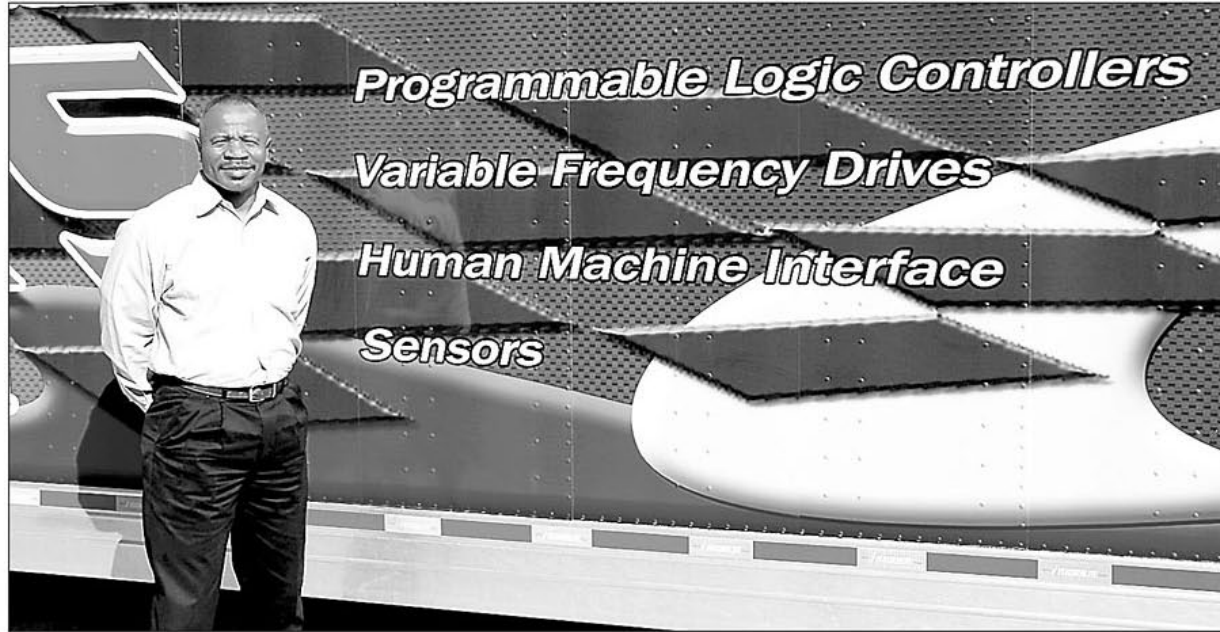
The Oklahoma Alliance for Manufacturing Excellence provides resources for training, business incentives and guidance. Prevost works with manufacturers in Seminole, Lincoln, Pottawatomie, Hughes and Okfuskee counties. His clients include Expanded Metal Solutions, Commercial Brick and Window Works in Wewoka, Enviro-Systems and Blue Wave Boats in Seminole, and Exxon-Mobil, TDK, Wood Pressure Group, Wolverine and Central Plastics in Shawnee.

The Alliance serves as a resource broker for manufacturing firms at no charge to clients. Prevost said his goals include improving productivity, increasing sales and reducing costs for local manufacturers.

There are encouraging signs of resurgence in the manufacturing sector. Business was slow last year, but the past six months small manufacturers are getting more orders, spending on equipment, training and hiring people and increasing output, he said.

In Oklahoma, the resurgence in manufacturing is following an increase in oil prices.

"Oklahoma has good jobs to be filled, but they require training in areas such as



Clarence Prevost, Oklahoma Alliance for Manufacturing Excellence extension agent at Gordon Cooper Technology Center, poses beside the GCTC Automated Manufacturing Technology Systems mobile training trailer. The AMTS trailer is one of many resources available to area manufacturers.  
 PHOTO PROVIDED

electronics, welding, machining, and programmable logic controllers. That's why CareerTech training is so important to sustaining and growing our manufacturing base," he said.

Manufacturers across the state are looking for people with solid skills. That's part of the reason why Oklahoma's unemployment rate is lower than other states in this region, he said.

Prevost is still deeply concerned about struggling communities in rural Oklahoma. The increase in oil prices helps spur growth in businesses such as machine shops and other oil field re-

lated small businesses, but a lot of the skilled workforce left rural areas during the downturn to seek employment.

"Local jobs can save rural Oklahoma, but those areas need a skilled workforce to support small manufacturers that relocate or reopen in those areas," he said.

There are bright spots outside the oil industry, too. Some people thought the textile industry was gone for good because of cheap labor in developing countries. Then Roundhouse moved part of its production to Wewoka, which was a boost to the local economy.

"Those 20 or so jobs make a difference," he said.

Foot Solutions is a new company getting started in Wewoka, manufacturing shoe inserts for diabetics. Most employment in the state comes from small employers, he said.

Commuting to work at major state employers such as Tinker Air Force Base and Boeing is making a difference in the counties to the east of Oklahoma City.

"These employers also need a skilled workforce. Gordon Cooper Technology Center is among the leaders training aviation mechan-

ics, sheet metal workers, and CNC machinists and welders," he said.

Prevost's work reflects a wealth of experiences. He grew up in Texas, and attended Prairie View A&M University in Prairie View, Texas where he received an ROTC scholarship and majored in engineering technology with a minor in business. He completed a bachelor's degree in 1980; accepted a commission in the U.S. Navy as an Ensign, and entered active duty. After completing a four-year tour of active service, Prevost moved to Muskogee in 1986 to go to work for Corning Glass as an

electrical supervisor.

A year later he accepted a similar post with Mobil in Shawnee. He worked for Exxon/Mobil as an electronics and electrical supervisor, project engineer and process engineer over a 15-year career; during which time he earned a Master's of Business Administration degree from Oklahoma City University. In 2000 he returned to reserve active duty in the Navy where he served five years managing training support for professional and personal development.

In April 2006 he accepted the manufacturing extension agent position with the Oklahoma Alliance for Manufacturing Excellence at Gordon Cooper Technology Center. The Alliance is a not-for-profit organization providing a variety of support to Oklahoma's manufacturing industry.

Prevost has close ties to Seminole County. He and his wife, Sandra and daughter Destiny live in Sasakwa. He served as associate pastor of Middle Creek Baptist Church in Sasakwa for three years. He has served as pastor of Community Baptist Church in Wewoka since 1999. He is a fitness and martial arts instructor as a hobby. He serves as president of the Sasakwa Public School Board of Education.

Anyone needing manufacturing consultation can contact Prevost at (405) 273-7493 extension 2255 or e-mail [clarencp@gctech.org](mailto:clarencp@gctech.org).