

ogy oriented programs for secondary students.

In addition, an internship program has been developed for OSU-Okmulgee students to gain manufacturing experience working with NEOMC firms. The internship program provides opportunities for a student to do concentrated research or project development in their field of training under the leadership and direction of a mentor, the student's employer, and the internship coordinator.

Students are required to keep thorough daily logs, plus prepare and give a final summary presentation. Mentors provide direction, assistance, and leadership, and meet with interns and the coordinators regularly. They also provide evaluations, reports, and time schedules throughout the experience to the coordinator.

Each student thrives under a one-to-one teacher ratio and the experience and knowledge of a mentor. In addition, it's an excellent preparation for the student's school-to-work transition.

"From an employer's standpoint, it gives us our future workers. The youth are the people who are going to be out there making our future," said Lee Wagner, Plant Manager of Paccar Winch, Okmulgee Division.

"We all understand and value the importance of developing a qualified and competitive work force. NEOMC is facilitating that process by encouraging these partnerships and internships," Klabenes proudly remarked.

Local manufacturers are quick to acknowledge the importance of NEOMC in their day-to-day operations. Covington Aircraft Engines, an Oklahoma company, searched three years for a company to manufacture the Bosch magneto cam, an engine part used primarily in crop dusting planes. During the 1930s, several companies were manufacturing the part. However, by the 1940s, no one was making the cam anymore forcing pilots to use the same parts over and over.

Covington's search finally came to an end when Bob Goodloe contacted Omni Manufacturing in Drumright. Clarence Harrelson's Omni corporation had not been a member

of NEOMC for long before reaping the rewards. "The last new cam was manufactured sometime around 1940, so the only available print showed length but not the degree or radius of angles," said Harrelson. Using some old existing magneto cams, Omini had a working prototype within six weeks. Covington was so pleased with the results he signed a four-year contract with Omni.

Goodloe helped Omni apply for a special certification, designating the Drumright firm as the only company in the world certified to make this part. This will have unending benefits for Omni. Besides Covington, there are roughly 20 other companies throughout the country working on this type of engine. Many of these companies will soon be using parts produced at Harrelson's plant.

Goodloe also helped write a Small Business Innovation Research grant application to seek funds for the reverse engineering project. Omni hopes to receive almost \$50,000 for the developing, testing, and manufacturing of prototypes.

Even larger companies, like Tulsa's Zebco Corp. see the benefits of NEOMC. Zebco Industrial Relations Manager Don Freeman has also been involved with the organization since its inception. Freeman could feel the synergy among the participating manufacturers in their very first meeting.

"People discovered they could accomplish more if they pooled their resources. It's also a known fact that there's strength in numbers. I think our voice is much stronger on issues including workers compensation that are of concern to the manufacturing industry," Freeman proclaimed.

Hugh Garrison, owner of Quality Machine, is another member and strong advocate of NEOMC. "It's a great network of manufacturers in terms of exchanging information," Garrison professes. Quality Machine generates 90 percent of their business from manufacturing parts for oil-related equipment. Due to Garrison's association with NEOMC, Quality Machine has been able to trade out work with other companies.

Garrison states, "There have been times

when I've needed to buy in great volume. We're working out an arrangement now where smaller companies like mine can buy the steel we need from firms that are buying in greater quantity. In essence, I can buy it cheaper that way." Garrison went on to add that, "None of the small businesses I'm familiar with have all the expertise they need. We can work together however, and make a lot of contacts with others who do have the expertise. As members of NEOMC, we have access to a lot of information, and that's been invaluable."

Garrison said, "As an active member of the NEOMC organization, I can unequivocally say that the greatest benefit realized by its membership is in the sharing of knowledge pertinent and unique to our industry. With the resources available through our organization, one can reach beyond boundaries seemingly inherent, but only limited by those imposed. It is for these reasons that I take pride in my membership."

NEOMC has cultivated a strong network of expertise to discover new solutions, increase productivity and create opportunities for companies to bid on contracts. "It is an organization that is a strong advocate for manufacturers because of our ability to unite various companies. Besides the many other advantages through networking resources, NEOMC provides members a forum to voice concerns along with providing avenues for action," Klabenes said.

All Oklahoma manufacturers and the state's economy share in the benefits derived by NEOMC. The cultivation of local vendors affects the entire state economy. And the state's labor pool is increased and enriched through the early and on-going training programs of NEOMC.

Today's "global economy" isn't just a buzzword. It's reality. The implications are that businesses must gear their efforts to compete — ultimately — in that global economy. But how can smaller businesses compete effectively against a veritable world of industry giants? By joining forces. Which is exactly what was in mind when this group of northeast Oklahoma manufacturers and concerned institutions got together in the fall of 1993. Their mission is to determine how they can strengthen their own manufacturing community to more effectively compete in this part of the country. In the entire United States. In the world. As one member said, NEOMC has proven that when manufacturers work together, there are no goals that cannot be accomplished. That's good for manufacturers; that's good for our young people; and that's good for Oklahoma.

#### Members can expect their partnering experiences within NEOMC to result in:

- A stronger network of expertise to formulate their own solutions.
- Increased opportunities to bid on projects, via joint bidding.
- Increased productivity and local economic growth through cultivation of local vendors.
- An advocacy, increasing power and leverage for voicing opinions on issues, mandates, legislation, through the uniting of multiple companies and organizations.
- Cost savings due to shared use of expertise, services, and consultants.
- Cost savings from shared expenses for employee education and other joint ventures.
- A larger, more dedicated pool of skilled labor/employees.