

## Bright Lights USA Hires Skilled Technicians through Grant-Funded Manufacturing Training Initiative

In the same year he obtained his degree from the Rutgers School of Business, Daniel Farber founded Bright Lights USA with his father in the family basement.

That was 26 years ago. Since then, their kernel of an idea has grown into a precision manufacturer of defense and industrial-turbine parts that employs close to 100 employees at two locations in Camden County.

Today, as he walks the production floors and hallways of his Barrington plant, CEO Farber looks every bit the part of the proud father—proud of his employees, his company's achievements and, not least of all, his company's tradition of community service.

He is also keenly aware that a demographic challenge facing all US manufacturers, the aging of an industrial workforce moving into its retirement years, could hamper growth at the company he and his father worked so hard to build.

"We have an aging workforce, and we know that we have to find new ways to develop staff," Farber explained during a recent tour of his plant on Shreve Road in Barrington.

**Farber gets help meeting this challenge from the NJ Community College Consortium for Workforce & Economic Development, a Trenton-based group that provides training through the state's 19 community colleges.** Among other programs, the Consortium provides on-demand, advanced manufacturing training for the long-term unemployed. Job candidates are fully trained and certified, and then matched with New Jersey manufacturers who wish to hire them.

Bright Lights is a strong partner in this process. The company helps the Consortium and Camden County College find and screen candidates for training, invites classes on tours of his Barrington and Camden City plants, and interviews job candidates. He has also donated manufacturing equipment to Camden County College for training purposes.



NJ Community College Consortium CEO Sivaraman Anbarasan presents Bright Lights USA CEO Daniel Farber with a Community Excellence Award for volunteering time and equipment to Camden County College's advanced manufacturing training programs. *Photo credit: Christopher Biddle*

Over the past several years, Bright Lights has hired close to a dozen graduates of the training program, one of whom is Randy Wilson, who was unable to find work for two years after losing his job as a diesel mechanic to layoffs at the Philadelphia Navy Yard. Wilson eventually found his way to Camden County College's Precision Machining Technician (PMT) training program. He graduated in May 2014, and was quickly hired by Bright Lights, which then trained him in his current position as a laser and rotary engraver operator.

"It helped me get back on my feet," Wilson, a married father of 8 grown children, said of the Consortium's training program.

**The Consortium's training programs are supported by state and federal Labor Department grants. As such,**

**they are available to employers and their employees free of tuition charges. In addition, manufacturers can be reimbursed for \$10,000 in wages paid to new hires during the training and transition process. This is made possible under a federal Ready to Work grant.**

Sivaraman Anbarasan, CEO of the NJ Community College Consortium, recently presented the Bright Lights chief executive with a Community Excellence Award for the time and resources he has devoted to the manufacturing training program.

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