

## **Rubio's staff visiting PGT to explore skills gap and workforce policy**

**By Staff Report**

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### **Meeting with employees about on-the-job training**

VENICE — Staff from former presidential contender Sen. Marco Rubio are scheduled to visit PGT Custom Windows + Doors, a subsidiary of Venice-based PGT Innovations, on Wednesday to highlight the importance of supporting industry-led partnerships, apprenticeships and other work-based learning opportunities.

Rubio's staff will meet with PGT employees who have seen career advances through on-the-job training and learn more about how philanthropy, business, community-based organizations and the public sector are collaborating to ensure people are getting the skills necessary to find jobs, according to the organization that arranged the visit, CareerEdge, a partnership of business, government, and philanthropic organizations that leverages public and private dollars to provide opportunities for better jobs and wages in Manatee and Sarasota counties.

Nationally and in Florida, some jobs are going unfilled because of a lack skilled workers: 55 percent of jobs in the Sunshine State are for middle-skill positions, or jobs that require education beyond high school but not a four-year degree, CareerEdge said, citing data from the National Skills Coalition.

But only 46 percent of Florida residents have the right training and education to get those jobs.

CareerEdge seeks to bridge that gap.

“From the employer-side, having these training programs available allows PGT to attract potential candidates who may have the soft skills that align with our core values, but not the level of technical skills required for the needed position,” said Rod Hershberger, CEO of PGT, a manufacturer of hurricane-resistant windows and doors with about 2,200 employees. “It would've been difficult to create a skills training program as extensive as we have now without the assistance of CareerEdge.”

Lawmakers also are crafting workforce development policies to bridge the skills gap, including sector partnerships and collaborations between businesses, schools and workforce entities such as CareerEdge.

“If we want our economy to work, we need to make it easier for businesses and workers to get the skills they need,” CareerEdge executive director Mireya Eavey said. “We are working hard in our region to make this happen, but there are some ways that federal policy could better support the collaborative, business-led efforts already underway in our community.”



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