

# VHEDC

Vadnais Heights Economic  
Development Corporation

## INTERNSHIP PROGRAM ENSURES SUCCESS FOR COMPANIES AND STUDENTS

### INTERNSHIPS AREN'T JUST FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS ANYMORE

By Nicola Kelley Hyser

In 2015, the Vadnais Heights Economic Development Corporation launched an internship program with Century College to help bridge the “skills gap” experienced by both employers and graduates. Nearly 60 percent of employers can’t find qualified employees. According to the Economic Policy Institute, the unemployment rate for college graduates is 7.2 percent, and the underemployment rate is 14.9 percent. For young high school graduates, the unemployment rate is 19.5 percent, and the underemployment rate is 37.0 percent ... Good reasons for forward-thinking VHEDC to expand its program to include high school students.

In August, White Bear Lake High School 2016 graduate Erik Boerner completed a short-term internship with Structural Wood Corporation of Vadnais Heights; he worked a 40 – 45 hour week, sometimes starting at 6 a.m., was paid hourly by the company and received a stipend from VHEDC. Structural Wood, founded in

1965, fabricates wood building materials for all types of buildings all across the country, from ice arenas to residential housing to large industrial complexes.

Erik says, “Structural Wood takes large pieces of wood and cuts them into smaller pieces of wood to fit the customers’ needs. I tracked the time it takes for orders to go through production and put the data into reports. I did this for different areas in the fabrication building, for the Ripsaw and MultiScore (saw) and for the warehouse, where different items of large inventory are pulled for future orders.”

Structural Wood President Jim Schumacher created the position for an intern because he wanted unbiased information. Also, he says, “We run operations so tight that we don’t have the luxury of tracking our own numbers. We have assumptions about our performance. We can now review the information and see how accurate we are. Erik met our expectations, and he’s an excellent young man.”

The timing was right, and Erik was a good fit for Structural Wood. He had taken a business and entrepreneurial class at WBLHS, and VHEDC Executive Director Ling Becker contacted



**Intern Erik Boerner – 2016  
White Bear Lake High School  
graduate – tracks time it takes  
for Structural Wood orders to  
go through production.**

the school for an intern. This year, he’ll start college at Montana State University with plans to study finance and entrepreneurship. Erik says, “This internship – my first – has been extremely rewarding. I’ve gotten real- world working experience, unlike anything I’ve done before. It taught me to pay attention to details and to keep track of a large inventory process. I also learned that whenever possible to find a job that offers free coffee!”

***Are you interested in learning more about the VHEDC internship program? Would you like to use this space to showcase your company’s opportunities and feature a successful employee? Contact VHEDC Director Ling Becker:  
651-485-9532; lingbecker@vhedc.com.***