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## Regional News

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### Taft touts success of intern program Governor tours a plant in Findlay

By **BENJAMIN ALEXANDER-BLOCH**  
BLADE STAFF WRITER

FINDLAY — Gov. Bob Taft touted his Third Frontier Internship Program yesterday at Rowmark Inc., using the polymer company, which manufactures plastic sheet material, to highlight the success of his pet economic development and research initiative.

"I am here to celebrate a great example of the Third Frontier Internship Program in action," Mr. Taft said. "We have a bit of a brain drain in Ohio, and it is important to keep our best and most talented here in the state."

Rowmark has had eight Third Frontier interns and has received more than \$20,000 in Third Frontier funds through PolymerOhio, a networking group for the more than 2,800 Ohio polymer facilities.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Toledo is ranked 14th in the nation in terms of fastest-shrinking populations. About 27 percent of 20 to 29-year-old Ohioans are leaving the state, according to the Ohio Board of Regents' statistics for 1995-2000.

The Third Frontier Internship Program, launched in 2003 by Mr. Taft and administered by the Ohio Department of Development, works to encourage high-tech innovation by keeping math, science, and engineering graduates



Gov. Bob Taft gives a thumbs-up at Rowmark Inc. during a tour with engineer and former intern Andrew Burgei, rear, and company executives Eric Hausserman and Duane E. Jebbett.

( THE BLADE/ANDY MORRISON )

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within the state.

It gives science and technology-based companies \$3,000 per student intern with the understanding that these companies will then provide interns with matching funds. The Ohio Department of Development has awarded more than \$8.5 million to 17 organizations around the state since 2003.

"More and more companies are now realizing the value of this program — how it supports both the company and the students who participate in it," said Richard Markham, program director for PolymerOhio.

Andrew Burgei interned at Rowmark last summer when he was a chemical engineering major at the University of Dayton. After graduating last spring, he was hired full time as a materials process engineer.

University of Toledo student Nathan Green, a mechanical engineering major, is an intern at Rowmark. He also interned at the company last spring and last summer. He's hoping to be hired after he graduates.

Mr. Green said through his internship, he has "learned how to manage larger projects and to work together as team ... like a family."

The West Central Development Corp. of Lima, Ohio, which garnered \$214,500, is the main northwestern Ohio company to receive internship funds, according to Holly Pendell, a public information officer with the Ohio Department of Development.

The majority of funds have gone to Columbus and Cleveland-based companies.

Statewide organizations that have contributed some money to northwestern Ohio companies include PolymerOhio, Ohio Aerospace Institute, and the Ohio Business Connection.

Mr. Taft will continue his high-tech initiative tour today at 10 a.m. in Bowling Green by designating the Center for Innovative Food Technology at the Agricultural Incubator Foundation, which provides technical solutions to companies involved in food processing, as an Edison Technology Center. These centers work to provide product and process innovation and commercialization services to technology-based businesses.

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