

Third Frontier allows interns to innovate

By Sarah Filus
Beacon Journal business writer

CANTON - Don Hester is the kind of student Ohio should try to recruit into its labor force after graduation, Gov. Bob Taft said Tuesday.

Hester attends the University of Akron, yet he already has his name on three pending patents for Hendrickson Trailer Suspension System.

And Hester is just an intern.

Hester and Hendrickson found each other through the Third Frontier Internship Program, an effort by Taft to rejuvenate Ohio's work force.

Hester said the internship more than anything he has learned in the classroom has prepared him for a career in engineering.

Taft spoke at Hendrickson, which supplies commercial truck and tractor suspensions, about Third Frontier's aim to expand high-tech capabilities in Ohio business, promote startup companies and create jobs that pay well.

The Third Frontier Internship Program, established by Taft in 2003 and administered by the Ohio Department of Development, matches students at Ohio colleges and universities with innovation-focused companies in the state.

Since the program's inception, the development department has granted more than \$8.5 million to 17 organizations in Ohio that distribute the money to companies that want to hire interns.

That money has aided about 2,800 interns from four-year, community and technical colleges. Last month, \$2.5 million in additional money was made available for as many as 700 more interns.

The Third Frontier program pays half the intern's wages (up to \$3,000 per student per year). The employer covers the rest

Hendrickson has employed 13 Third Frontier interns. It has eight now.

Taft, surrounded by the company's employees, said Third Frontier was created because "too many of our best and brightest were leaving the state to find jobs."

Hendrickson has received more than \$19,600 for the program through the Employment Source, a work-force development and training center in Canton that takes in the state money and matches companies and interns.

Adrian Grapenthin, another Hendrickson intern who is **a student at the University of Toledo**, has been employed through the program since 2004. She helped develop software for the company. "This is not only training to stay here at Hendrickson, but also training for life," Grapenthin said of the program.

Hendrickson plans to hire five people in the next year who started in the internship program.

To be eligible for the program, students must be Ohio residents, at least 18 and studying a curriculum that includes math, science or engineering.