

## Second chance golden for seniors

Real world skills combined with practical education lead to diplomas for students

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*C.T. Kruger*

Brian Janke shows Instructor Doug Baisley a spreadsheet he has been working on in the Second Chance classroom at Tailored Label Products where 15 students study, then go off to nearby jobs.

**Menomonee Falls** — Four seniors received their high school diplomas Saturday from Menomonee Falls High School, but haven't attended classes there since fall 2008.

Ali Haefner, Brian Janke, Cody Watson and Matt Lutz enrolled in Second Chance Partners for Education, a nonprofit alternative education program.

Second Chance Partners allows students to continue their high school education while learning real life skills working for local manufacturing businesses.

"I kept messing up in school," said Watson, 17. "I had bad grades and poor attendance."

### Traditional classroom not for everyone

Second Chance works with students who are not doing well in a traditional high school setting, but have the interest and dedication to receive an education, said Doug Baisley, a teacher with Second Chance.

"They don't see the value in a classroom setting," he said. "They would rather have a hands-on experience and learn specifically what they need in the working world."

Instead of spending eight hours in school, students enrolled in Second Chance attend school for two to three hours daily at Tailored Label in Menomonee Falls. Classes include core academics like math and science, as well as financial and information and communication technology literacy. Students work at their own pace, meeting deadlines. They are responsible for their own homework, fixing incorrect problems until they get it right to receive credit for assignment. The rest of their time is spent working for

companies like Tailored Label. They learn practical skills like workplace ethics and personal and social responsibility on the factory floors.

The alternative education worked well with Janke, 18. He had a credit deficiency before his guidance counselor told him about Second Chance Partners. Janke received a merit award in academic achievement for staying on top in performance in his schoolwork and work.

One of Janke's opportunities included an unpaid internship with Glendale Machining after being laid off last October. He worked in their IT department fixing and troubleshooting computers.

## Program started in 1996

Second Chance Partners started in 1996 with Watertown High School students enrolled in the program, while working for Generac Power Systems in Jefferson. Second Chance now works with 15 school districts and 20 local businesses. Ninety students are enrolled in the program.

While students do attend classes off of their respective high school campuses, they are still able to use their schools' guidance counselors, as well as participate in extracurricular activities. All four seniors have made-post graduation plans. Haefner will attend Waukesha County Technical College for graphic design; Janke will attend WCTC for network or database administration; Watson will attend WCTC for plastic molding injection; Lutz will work at Glendale Manufacturing.

Janke is grateful for the experience the Second Chance program has given him.

"We weren't treated as kids, but as adults," Janke said. "We were given opportunities like any working adult has."

## FYI

To learn more about Second Chance Partners for Education, visit their website [secondchancepartners.org](http://secondchancepartners.org).