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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Arkansas Office of Skills Development to Join Greenway Equipment to Fund Ag Power System Technology Program at the Lonoke Business Academy

*A partnership of a private sector employer and the State of Arkansas alleviates workforce talent shortages while providing career opportunities for Lonoke area students.*

**LITTLE ROCK, Arkansas (February 3, 2023)** – The Arkansas Office of Skills Development (OSD), in partnership with Greenway Equipment, is investing over a million dollars to support the development and implementation of an “Ag Power System Technology” program at the Lonoke Business Academy. This program will train high school students in Carlisle, Hazen, England, Des Arc, and Lonoke school districts to maintain and repair specialized farm, ranch, and agribusiness power equipment and vehicles at no cost to students.

Greenway Equipment has committed \$1.5 million to the project in an effort help alleviate workforce shortages in the agricultural technology field. With sales and service locations in Arkansas and southeastern Missouri, Greenway Equipment employs nearly 200 service technicians. However, due to a lack of qualified applicants, Greenway estimates that they are short roughly 30 service technicians at any given time. These are local, high-wage positions that go unfilled. Starting pay for ag technicians is \$18 an hour and that increases over time to up to \$32 an hour, plus other bonuses and incentives. Students attending high school and pursuing the Ag Power System Technology program through the Lonoke School District will receive the skills and training to necessary to become employees of Greenway. However, students completing the program will have many options. They will graduate high school with a marketable skillset attractive to many employers in the trucking and transportation sector.

Cody Waits, Director of the Office of Skills Development acknowledges the distinctiveness of this collaboration. “This is a unique partnership. It has something for everyone. It highlights the impact private sector employers can make in workforce development and career education by partnering with local and regional public education and the State of Arkansas to create opportunities for students that align with their own hiring needs. It meets their workforce demands and provides opportunities for students. This is truly a win-win situation.”

Since agriculture is Arkansas' largest industry, contributing about \$16 billion to the state's economy each year, this program's impact will be far reaching.

[Governor's statement]

The grant and private investment monies will go toward equipment, faculty and curriculum development, tools, and materials for the program. The program is scheduled to launch in fall of 2023, with 24 students participating annually. Greenway is committed to hiring graduates at \$18 an hour to start.

"The future is bright for these students and will only get brighter as we continue to expand and integrate technology and automation into the industry," said a Greenway representative.

**DISCLAIMER:** The Office of Skills Development (OSD), a division of the Arkansas Department of Commerce, is the state agency responsible for the oversight, expansion, and funding of Registered Apprenticeship (RA) programs and Secondary Career Centers throughout the state. OSD also supports Arkansas businesses by awarding workforce development grants. OSD strategically invests in all levels of the Arkansas workforce, from students to incumbent workers, by raising education and skill levels, meeting the needs of companies operating in Arkansas, balancing workforce and employer interests, leading to greater economic achievement for workers and companies.