

## Governor Bullock Recognizes Montana's First Apprenticeship Program in the Manufacturing Industry

*Apprenticeship program to help train workforce to meet the demands of West Paw Design's growing business*

MONTANA – Governor Steve Bullock today visited West Paw Design's manufacturing facility in Bozeman to recognize the company's new apprenticeship program aimed at training workers to meet the demands of the growing business. This injection molding training program is Montana's first registered apprenticeship in the manufacturing industry.

**“Innovation certainly runs through our veins here in Montana, whether its harnessing new technologies or manufacturing outdoor gear, tasty microbrews, and world-class toys for our four-legged friends,”** said Governor Bullock. **“Businesses are able to nurture these big ideas through on-the-job training and apprentices are able to earn a living wage while developing the skills and knowledge to take on the jobs of the future.”**



*Gov. Bullock tours West Paw Design in Bozeman, Mont.*

West Paw Design worked with the Montana Registered Apprenticeship unit through the Montana Department of Labor & Industry to create a highly customized program. The program is a nontraditional

hybrid program that includes both competency and time-based components that will allow workers to move through the program quickly as West Paw looks to skill up workers more efficiently. The program includes a high level of safety and technical education training.

“West Paw is incredibly excited to participate in Montana’s new apprenticeship program. Our unique perspective is that a diverse economy makes for strong communities. By creating manufacturing apprenticeships, we not only have the opportunity to educate but also to demonstrate the diversified work environment that manufacturing provides. Montana’s Apprenticeship Program will help us attract, train and retain great employees. It is a win for all,” **said Spencer Williams, CEO and President, West Paw.**

West Paw Design attended a presentation on apprenticeships at Governor Bullock’s Innovate Montana Symposium last summer and has since worked with Montana Registered Apprenticeship unit to create a set of standards for the injection molding apprenticeship.

West Paw began as a small Livingston-based pet toy company in 1996 and has since expanded to one of Montana’s largest exporters with over 70 employees. They were named one of the nation’s best small companies by Forbes in 2016 and as the top manufacturer in the state by the Montana Manufacturing Association in 2017.

Montana leads the nation in manufacturing GDP growth. Overall, manufacturing in Montana added \$3.2 billion to the state’s GDP in 2016, over \$1.2 billion more than the industry’s 2011 contribution.

Since 2000, over 1,000 business sponsors across the state have implemented training programs through the Montana Registered Apprenticeship program. Almost 90% of apprentices stay in Montana after completing their programs and registered apprentices who successfully completed their training have an average wage nearly \$20,000 higher than the statewide average wage. Since 2013, registered apprenticeships have increased by almost 30% with training programs available in over 70 occupations.