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Kappen Tree Service Expands Training To Support Safety, Growth, & Retention

Kappen Tree Service, a well-known and highly respected employer in Michigan's rural Thumb region, employs approximately 409 individuals and is proudly woman-owned. The company specializes in line clearance services, playing a critical role in maintaining a reliable power supply across the state. Their clients include major utility providers such as DTE Energy (Detroit Edison), International Transmission Company (ITC), and Thumb Electric Cooperative (TEC). Each year, Kappen Tree Service clears approximately 3,000 miles of power lines, making workforce development essential to sustaining operations.

To meet the ongoing need to attract, train, and retain skilled employees, Kappen Tree Service has invested heavily in apprenticeship programs. The Going PRO Talent Fund has been a strong fit in supporting these efforts, helping offset the costs associated with training, including lost productivity, safety gear, equipment, and continued instruction.

All tree trimmers at Kappen Tree Service participate in an apprenticeship program through IBEW Local 17, progressing through a structured five-step framework. Apprentices undergo regular evaluations, and each advancement is tied to wage increases. This structured approach, combined with continued training, ensures employees build the skills needed to succeed while staying aligned with career progression opportunities. The investment in apprenticeship training also plays a key role in strengthening employee loyalty and improving retention.

Through the Going PRO Talent Fund, Kappen Tree Service achieved significant training outcomes. A total of 113 Tree Trimmer–Line Clearance apprentices received on-the-job training, including 90 current apprentices and 23 new apprentices. Of the new apprentices, 17 reached 100% retention, while six achieved 75% retention. In total, the company received $390,250 in reimbursement to support these training efforts.

The impact of this investment has been substantial. As Jason from Kappen Tree Service shared, "Receiving this grant has transformed our company. It enabled us to turn our ideas into reality, and the results are evident—our employees perform some of the most dangerous tasks daily, and now we can be confident that they have the proper tools and training to do their work safely and efficiently." He added, "Our additional training has led to higher production. A safe, efficient workforce helps our company secure and retain work in our industry."

A well-trained, safety-focused workforce positions Kappen Tree Service to meet today's challenges and tomorrow's demands.