

Bowles **Rice**

VIEWS *&* VISIONS

BOWLESRICE.COM

SUMMER 2024

Changing the Perspective of Modern Manufacturing in West Virginia



Markee Schindler
Nucor Corporation

Markee Schindler is the Talent and Community Relations Manager at Nucor Steel West Virginia. She joined the Nucor team in October 2022 as Talent and Community Relations Supervisor. Prior to joining Nucor, Markee was a Manager of Business Development for the West Virginia Department of Economic Development and worked as part of the team bringing Nucor to West Virginia. She is a native West Virginian who is passionate about growing the wealth of the state's economy and providing opportunity for West Virginians. A first-generation graduate, she earned her bachelor's in communication studies from West Virginia University.

Growing up on a farm in southern Jackson County with the attitude of "I have to get out of here," I would not have imagined my career to be based right here in my home state of West Virginia. Furthermore, I certainly did not dream of working in manufacturing. But here we are...

I was the first in my family to move farther than an hour away from home and to graduate college. After college, I worked several jobs, which led me to where I am today – a young professional raising a family in Huntington. I can imagine I am not the only one who may have this kind of story.

For the past two years, I have spent time in several Nucor steelmaking facilities throughout the United States and with hundreds of Nucor teammates. It is interesting how similar the perception of the steel industry is to the view many share about West Virginia. Both could



into steel. Circular steelmaking, like the 27-steelmaking facilities Nucor operates, is a much more sustainable method. This process uses an electric arc furnace to recycle scrap steel into a new product used to build automobiles, washing machines, bridges, and stadiums, for example.

The Nucor facility in Mason County will be one of the most technically advanced steel mills in the country and with the lowest carbon footprint. When hiring, the Nucor team that will operate this facility will require curiosity, strategic thinking, and problem-solving skills as well as a passion for innovation rather than mere physical strength. Of course, as a manufacturing

“The Nucor facility in Mason County will be one of the most technically advanced steel mills in the country, and with the lowest carbon footprint.”

be perceived as outdated or rustic, when, in reality, they are quite innovative and significant to our economy.

When thinking about steelmaking, if you visualize smokestacks and physically demanding jobs, you are not alone. However, this is not the steelmaking that Nucor represents. Traditional, or integrated, steel mills use a blast furnace and a basic oxygen furnace to turn iron ore, limestone, and coal

facility, we will have areas that are dirty and occasionally loud from an electric charge, but, primarily, our process and products will be reflective of advanced manufacturing.

Inside our 2.7 million square-foot manufacturing facility, you'll find a tech enthusiast's dream. The plant will be equipped with pulpits featuring display screens that allow our team to control massive production equipment. Thousands



of sensors are embedded throughout the production process, constantly monitoring and optimizing operations. Robotic arms provide samples of molten steel for our team to test to ensure the highest quality standards, among other things. Advanced formulas are used to produce steel that meets the growing demands of the world's most challenging applications.



One example of the Nucor facility's unprecedented level of automation is the fully automated material handling system. From the entry to the hot rolling mill to the final product, all cranes and material handling equipment operate without teammate intervention. This seamless automation moves work-in-progress from one area to another efficiently and safely. However, what is this cutting-edge technology without a skilled team to operate and maintain it?

Nucor's dedicated professionals are the backbone of our operation, ensuring that every technology functions flawlessly. We don't consider them our "employees" but rather a "teammate" – someone who is part of the same team with a shared set of values and goals. To us, a teammate reflects an inclusive culture, a sense of camaraderie and mutual respect. This is why you may hear us refer to our team as friends or even family. It's a part of what we believe sets us apart.

I often think about how different my professional career would have been if I had had more exposure to different careers as a student. West Virginia's corporate citizens can play a major role in bringing awareness to our youth about the manufacturing industry. We need to educate them through our personal stories and experiences in working in this industry. Providing a sense of belonging, encouragement, and a line of sight could, quite frankly, change the trajectory of a student's pathway. By volunteering at our local schools, teaching STEM activities, providing internship opportunities, or speaking with university clubs and organizations, we can share a glimpse of what it is like to be a part of the manufacturing community. But, more importantly, it can provide a sense of hope and opportunity for so many in West Virginia. 

