

Press Release

Welding, brazing and sealing for a better future

Freudenberg realigns its refugee aid initiative

Weinheim, August 3, 2017. “Good morning, Hakim!” Instructor Hagen Braun greets the young man with the ponytail as he enters the Freudenberg training workshop. Abdul-Hakim Alekozai is, as always, the first to arrive and is there a good half an hour before the start of the lesson. One by one, Ahmed Al-Hlewaa, Nwachukwu “Samuel” Ifeanyichukwu, Sami Bachtiar and Stanley Okorie arrive to join Hakim. As they pull on their blue work clothes, they exchange friendly greetings and chat about the latest news. Team spirit is good, as the instructor confirms. Braun has been accompanying the young men since October 2016. The five men are undertaking a preparatory work placement. In September, they will start a technical training program for metalworkers at Freudenberg in Weinheim and at network partners Naturin and Faber – financed by the Freudenberg refugee aid initiative.

Integrating refugees into the labor market is a central task for politics, business and society. As one of the largest companies in the Rhine-Neckar metropolitan region, Freudenberg is tackling this challenge and redefining its approach to refugee aid. Five refugees have been pursuing dual vocational training since September 2017. The remaining one million Euros out of a total donation pot of 2.6 million Euros will in future be used exclusively for this purpose. Head of Training Dr. Rainer Kuntz explained the company’s motivation: “Our goal is to provide long-term prospects for refugees by giving them a solid vocational training. At the same time, we also learn a lot ourselves.” Kuntz’s view is that regular

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exchange expands horizons and enables valuable experiences to be gathered. In total, 12 to 15 refugees are to begin training programs in the next three years.

Subject-specific German supplements theory and practice

The five refugees meet in the conference room on the first floor of the Freudenberg training workshop. Daniel Genswein, a teacher at the Hans Freudenberg School, is already waiting for them. Every morning, he goes over the most important terms with them that have come up on the previous day during practical training in the workshop. Alongside their books and exercise sheets, the trainees have brought their workpieces with them: pipes that they have brazed together.

Over the summer holiday preceding the start of their training program, Genswein will give the refugees six hours of German lessons a day. He will also be their teacher during their training period. “Is it ‘der’, ‘die’ or ‘das’ Muffe?” asks Samuel. Genswein thinks for a moment. He is sometimes not too familiar with the technical terms either. “It’s ‘die’ Muffe”, he says. The teacher is in close contact with Hagen Braun, who provides him with photos from the workshop. During their lessons, the students then put names to the different pictures: copper, sealing paste, thread... “To learn a trade properly, subject-specific theory and practice are just as important as knowledge of the German language. Ultimately, the trainees need to be able to converse with their colleagues and to ask for things”, Genswein explained.

Vocational training opens up prospects for the future

After their German lesson, the refugees return to the ground floor of the training workshop to join their co-trainees. They are taught together. Cutting screw threads is on the curriculum for everyone today. Because the training of the refugees is being financed from the donation pot, their places can be offered in addition to the regular 65 training places. Parallel to the five young men in Weinheim, another refugee is beginning a dual degree in

mechanical engineering. He will soon be starting the work experience phase at Freudenberg's site in Kaiserslautern. Regardless of what kind of vocational training they are doing with Freudenberg's support, the refugees share a common motivation: "It is important to me to be able to earn my own living", says Alekozai. He pushes up his goggles and passes the brazing torch to Samuel, who is next in line. Samuel nods in agreement and adds: "With the training, we get the opportunity to provide for ourselves. I feel for the first time in my life that I have the chance to build a future for myself."

Picture captions:

Dr. Rainer Kuntz, Head of Training and initiator of the project, regularly visits the training workshop and talks to the refugees about their progress and experiences.

During daily German lessons with their teacher Daniel Genswein, the refugees learn the technical terms they will need to be able to do a good job in the company.

Instructor Hagen Braun directs Abdul-Hakim Alekozai (front), Ahmed Al-Hlewaa (back left) and Nwachukwu "Samuel" Ifeanyichukwu (back right) in the training workshop and teaches them the most important skills needed to attain their professional goals as industrial mechanics or machine and plant operators.

Über die Freudenberg Gruppe

Freudenberg ist ein globales Technologieunternehmen, das seine Kunden und die Gesellschaft durch wegweisende Innovationen nachhaltig stärkt. Gemeinsam mit Partnern, Kunden und der Wissenschaft entwickelt die Freudenberg Gruppe technisch führende Produkte, exzellente Lösungen und Services für mehr als 30 Marktsegmente und für Tausende von Anwendungen: Dichtungen, schwingungstechnische Komponenten, Vliesstoffe, Filter, Spezialchemie, medizintechnische Produkte, IT-Dienstleistungen und modernste Reinigungsprodukte.

Innovationskraft, starke Kundenorientierung sowie Diversity und Teamgeist sind die Eckpfeiler der Unternehmensgruppe. Der Exzellenzanspruch, Verlässlichkeit und pro-aktives, verantwortungsvolles Handeln gehören zu den gelebten Grundwerten in der 168-jährigen Unternehmensgeschichte.

Im Jahr 2016 beschäftigte die Freudenberg Gruppe mehr als 48.000 Mitarbeiter in rund 60 Ländern weltweit und erwirtschaftete einen Umsatz von rund 8,6 Milliarden Euro (inklusive quotaler Konsolidierung der Gemeinschaftsunternehmen). Weitere Informationen unter www.freudenberg.com.