

Better education is what the U.S. needs

"Manufacturing saw the largest decline in paid employees," Robyn L. Minor reported in the Sunday edition of the Daily News, referring to the situation in Bowling Green and the surrounding region.

"In 2008, 127 manufacturing facilities had 10,414 employees with an annual payroll of \$438.4 million," Minor reported. "By 2010, manufacturing jobs had dropped to 7,515 among 117 employers. The payroll had dropped by nearly \$100 million."

What we are witnessing is essentially a seismic shift in the fundamental nature of work – not an aberration in the "business cycle" caused by the Great Recession. Nationally, manufacturing jobs have been in decline for the past four decades. The signs are universal and unambiguous.

"Hyperefficient globalized companies need fewer workers," New York Times columnist David Brooks notes. "As a result, unemployment rises, superstar salaries surge while lower-skilled wages stagnate, the middle gets hollowed out and inequality grows. The United States, once the world's educational leader, is falling back in the pack. Unemployment is high, but companies still have trouble finding skilled workers."

All critics aside, education increasingly holds the key to our future as a country. And the advantages of a college education are well documented.

"College graduates tend to have longer life expectancies, higher household incomes, lower divorce rates and fewer single-parent families than those with less education," noted Sabrina Tavernise, also in The New York Times. "Just 24 percent of the adult residents of metropolitan Dayton have four-year degrees. Like many Rust Belt cities, it is a captive of its rich manufacturing past, when well-paying jobs were plentiful and landing one without a college degree was easy."

The writing is on the wall. But as has been the case with global warming, we probably won't make any serious attempt to avert disaster until denial is no longer an option.

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The Daily News
(Bowling Green, KY)
Wednesday, July 11, 2012
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