

SEMI, SWEET



Photo by Deb Gau

Local and state officials, adult educators, and representatives of Minnesota West Community and Technical Colleges gathered Tuesday to dedicate a new semi truck and trailer contributed with the help of Cliff Viessman Trucking. The truck will be used for behind-the-wheel training in Minnesota West's commercial driving program. Pictured, from left to right are: Les Kvam, Pat Thomas, Minnesota West Interim President Barbara McDonald, Rep. Chris Swedzinski, Tim Miller of Viessman Trucking, Dan Wagner, Marshall Mayor Bob Byrnes, Dawn Regnier, Harry Weilage, Marshall Police Chief Rob Yant, Marshall City Council member David Sturrock and Kevin Honetschlager.

Contribution of semi and trailer will benefit MN West commercial driving students

By Deb Gau

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MARSHALL — Students at Minnesota West Community and Technical Colleges will be getting behind-the-wheel training in a new semi truck and trailer. But it took a lot of teamwork to put that truck on the road, said speakers at a dedication ceremony Tuesday afternoon.

"This is a big day for us," said Dawn Regnier, director of customized training at Minnesota West. "This is an opportunity to get some new equipment into our truck driving program."

The new semi will be used by commercial driving students, to practice backing and maneuvering with a trailer.

Representatives of Minnesota West Community and Technical Colleges, Cliff Viessman Trucking, area adult education, the city of Marshall and Rep. Chris Swedzinski gathered at the Minnesota Emergency Response and Industrial Training (MERIT) Center to dedicate the new semi and trailer.

The contribution of the semi was made possible by Viessman Trucking and through state leverage equipment funding, said Barbara McDonald, interim president of Minnesota West.

"I want to thank them from the bottom of our hearts," McDonald said.

A bill passed by the Minnesota Legislature included appropriations to Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, for equip-

ment for training programs in high-demand occupations. The colleges and universities need to secure matching contributions from non-state sources to receive the funds.

For the \$30,000 semi and trailer, Viessman Trucking contributed \$15,000, which was matched by the leverage funding. The new semi also has features like a special training seat in the cab, where a driving instructor can sit.

McDonald also thanked Swedzinski and state legislators who supported the leverage equipment funding. This year, Minnesota West has been able to use \$198,000 in equipment funding, she said. Minnesota

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West has also received a total of \$470,000 in matching donations and equipment that will expand opportunities for students.

Speakers at the ceremony said Minnesota West's commercial driving program is also an example of the kind of training

that will take place at the MERIT Center's new driving track, which is under construction now.

"That's going to expand the training opportunities here," said Rob Yant, Marshall director of public safety.