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Apprenticeship Opportunities – Earn While You Learn – Graduate College Debt Free!

“What would you say if I told you there was a way to go to college for free and to get a paycheck at the same time?” asked Ashley Kern, human resources manager at Ingersoll Rand, a member of the Davidson & Davie Apprenticeship Consortium (DDAC), as she explained apprenticeships to students at Davie County High School.

US manufacturers are facing a gap—not only in finding the skills needed but also in Americans’ interest in pursuing long-term careers in manufacturing. Apprenticeship programs have become one of the ways businesses and education systems are coming together to build a pipeline of qualified labor for the workforce.

Seven local companies have joined forces to establish the Davidson & Davie Apprenticeship Consortium (DDAC) to address national workforce challenges and to educate high school students, parents, and the public about the many benefits of pursuing a career in manufacturing. In addition to Ingersoll Rand, Consortium members include Avgol, BMK Americas, CPM Wolverine Proctor, Egger Wood Products, and Kurz. It is sponsored by Davie County Economic Development Commission, Davidson County Economic Development Commission, Davidson County Community College, and ApprenticeshipNC.

One of the Consortium’s primary goals is to change the misconceptions and dispel the myths about today’s advanced manufacturing that are preventing younger workers from entering manufacturing fields.

“Although 90% percent of Americans believe manufacturing is very important to economic prosperity, only 30% of American parents would encourage their children to pursue a career in manufacturing,” said Kern, referencing statistics from the Deloitte Perception of Manufacturing Study. “We are essentially saying that manufacturing is important, just not for my kids.”

“There is a huge branding issue for manufacturing,” she added. “I tell students all of the time that manufacturing is considered DDD--dirty, dark, and dangerous. Students don’t know about all of the cool things happening in manufacturing like automation and robotics and all of those little pieces that are part of manufacturing. And women aren’t well represented in manufacturing, so when I speak to students in high school classes all of the women tune me out because they think manufacturing isn’t for them. We are trying to rebrand manufacturing by sharing all of the wonderful things that are happening within our companies.”

As part of this rebranding effort and as a means to attract young workers, the DDAC has created an apprenticeship program that will give students the opportunity to learn a skill set or trade by combining paid on-

the-job learning and classroom instruction. Students gain work experience as they build a career without accruing student debt. If the apprentice is recruited three months before graduating from high school, the state of North Carolina will pay for the tuition and books. Otherwise, the employer pays the expenses.

Apprentices are paid for 40 hours per week which includes 8 hours in class and 32 hours in on-the-job training. During the four-year program, apprentices work between 6400 to 8000 hours and attend 1600 hours of community college classes which earns them an associate's degree. Based on North Carolina journeyman's rates, participants earn \$9 an hour the first year, \$10 the second, \$12 the third, and \$15 an hour during the final year. They also receive company-paid benefits of health, dental and vision insurance as well as a 401K program during the entire program. Upon completing the program, apprentices have an associate's degree, a journeyman's certificate from the state of North Carolina, a journeyman's certificate from the Federal Department of Labor and a guaranteed job with a minimum salary of \$36,000 per year and no educational debt.

"When we are going into classrooms, we are specifically targeting students who have decided four years of college is not for them," Kern said. "We want to let them know there is another option. We tell students about the apprenticeship program and how they can work with their hands every day and that we will pay for all of their tuition and books. The students are getting really excited. The parents are getting even more excited because we are giving them another avenue they didn't know existed."

The approach is working. During a recent presentation at Davie County High School, 67 qualified students expressed an interest in the program.

Kern outlined the steps to becoming an apprentice:

Step 1: Interested?

- Like to make things happen?
- Like to work with their hands?
- Are ready to start a career?

Consortium members will hold classroom presentations January 29 - February 6, 2019. Davidson County Community College is hosting a public information night on January 31st from 3-7 p.m. Presentations on the program will be held at 3 p.m., 4:30 p.m., and 6 p.m.

Step 2: Open House

- You must attend at least one.
- Your parent/guardian must attend too.
- Opportunity to take a tour and ask questions

This is where members of the Consortium can set themselves apart because each will host an open house between February 10 - March 3, 2019

Step 3: Application

- Deadline is March 3
- An official transcript is required.

Selection guidelines: Recommended 2.5 GPA, Math 1,2,3, preferred courses include physics, drafting, metals manufacturing. Applications will be accepted from January 29 - March 3, 2019; visit the DDAC website to see how to apply.

Step 4: Orientation

- Four nights (must be there every night).
- Projects and testing > is an apprenticeship right for you?

Orientation will be held the week of March 9, 2019. DCCC will administer an assessment and applicants will complete a number of projects like running conduit and building wire racks and welding them together. Our supervisors will assess how well they pick things up, how well they take direction as well as the final product. The assessment will be followed by a matching ceremony. Students pick the companies they are interested in working for based on their interactions with the companies and the companies choose the students they would like to work with and the Consortium tries to align the two.

Step 5: Pre-Apprenticeship

- Start earning money!
- Two college classes.
- Hands-on training.
- Paid for training and classroom hours.

Pre-Apprenticeship training will be held June 11 - July 29, 2019. During the six-week program, apprentices work a couple hours a week to get their feet wet and then take a couple of required basic classes. This is paid for. At the end of the pre-apprenticeship program, there will be a huge signing ceremony to make things exciting for the students.

After outlining the apprenticeship program, Kern also enthusiastically explained how it can benefit many different stakeholders:

Apprentices earn an associates degree and journeyman certificate(s) and the earn-as-you-learn model ensures earnings while training.

Educational institutions have the opportunity to develop closer relationships with industry partners. Members of the Consortium are partnering on the boards of the schools and helping them develop their curriculum so that what students are learning in the classroom directly ties to what they are learning on the job.

Businesses benefit through increased visibility from their recruitment efforts; expand their training and education options for their employees which can increase employee retention, loyalty, and leadership; and gain trained and educated employees which addresses pipeline concern and problem-solving capability.

State, Federal, and local government see an increase in upwardly mobile individuals who fuel economic development.

"We are targeting kids within Davie and Davidson Counties and encouraging them to stay here by specifically hosting the apprenticeship program here and then guaranteeing them jobs post-apprenticeship," said Kern.

"The apprenticeship program is a true win-win for everyone in the community," said Kern. She is proud of the work the Consortium is doing and hopes that additional companies will want to join. For more information about the Davidson & Davie Apprenticeship Consortium, visit <http://ddac.tech>.