



CBI NEWS

the newsletter for business and industry training

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VHCC Students Preparing to Enter the Workforce with Virginia Career Readiness Certificate

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Contact the Center for Business and Industry at Virginia Highlands Community College for customized training.

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Gatorade in Wytheville now requires it for employment. Eastman Chemical Company in Kingsport also requires it for employment. What is "it?" "It" is the Virginia Career Readiness Certificate. And "It" is becoming increasingly popular as a pre-employment hiring assessment across Southwest Virginia and East Tennessee.

The Virginia Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) was instituted by former Governor Mark Warner, and was endorsed by the Virginia Workforce Council in 2003. The true value of this portable credential is that it provides a common language between the business world and those who provide education and training for future workers.

Virginia residents can qualify for and receive the certificate by scoring at appropriate levels on three WorkKeys assessments --Applied Mathematics, Reading for Information, and Locating Information. Testing is available at Virginia Highlands Community College and other Community Colleges across the Commonwealth. WorkKeys is a workplace skills assessment system used nationwide. Developed by ACT, it measures the skill levels of workers and also documents the skills required by occupations and specific jobs.

In the fall of 2007, Ronnie Frye, Associate Professor, Electricity at Virginia Highlands Community College approached the Center for Business and Industry to help his students prepare for the three WorkKeys tests required for the CRC and one additional test, Applied Technology. Several of his students were interested in applying for jobs at Eastman Chemical Company and knew they needed high test scores to qualify for an Electrical Maintenance position at Eastman.



Working with Mr. Frye and Betty Domjahn, Tech Prep and Perkins Coordinator at VHCC, Dean, Melinda Leland was able to develop a semester long, non-credit course to provide refresher training in the four WorkKeys areas for twenty-six students. Utilizing a software program called KeyTrain, students have spent a minimum of one hour per week working through sample test questions. The software is also available on-line giving students the flexibility of practicing both in and outside of the classroom.

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Professor Frye was eager to help the students in his class obtain this certification. “These guys are a sharp bunch and I know they will be well prepared for the workforce when they graduate with their diploma in electricity, but sometimes a company has different requirements for hiring. We wanted to make sure we set our students up to be successful in finding a job,” said Mr. Frye

VHCC Student, Tim Schaeffer, was actual the catalyst behind the class. “I applied for a job at Eastman in the maintenance department last fall. I didn’t know CBI offered the testing so I drove all the way to Pellissippi State College in Knoxville, Tennessee to take the tests. When I missed the required score on the Reading for Information test by just one point, I didn’t want to drive all the way to Knoxville to retake the test,” Schaeffer said. “I was speaking with my college counselor and found out that CBI could provide the training and testing so I talked with Mr. Frye and Dean Leland. They were very helpful in setting up the preparation class and testing not just for me, but anyone in the electricity class that wanted to participant. I have since taken Reading for Information again and received the score I needed.”

Mr. Schaeffer credits practicing for the test using KeyTrain software with helping him get the score he needed. “I did well in my college English composition course, but this test requires you to use a different skill set.” The WorkKeys Reading for Information exam measures the skill people use when they read and use written text in order to do a job. The written texts include memos, letters, directions, signs, notices, bulletins, policies, and regulations. It is often the case that workplace communications are not necessarily well-written or targeted to the appropriate audience.

When asked about job prospects with Eastman at the present time, Mr. Schaeffer indicated he has been called back for a second interview and is hopeful that he’ll soon be employed. (Mr. Schaeffer was laid off from a local manufacturer in 2005.)

Today’s Apprentice: Tomorrow’s Workforce

Securing a skilled and productive workforce is a major need for businesses today. Large corporations and small companies alike spend considerable time and resources trying to attract and retain skilled workers. Registered apprenticeship is a proven, industry-based approach to learning that combines on-the-job training and classroom instruction to produce a highly skilled, dedicated workforce.

How can Apprenticeship work for your organization?

- Apprenticeship is an agreement between and employer who needs a skilled worker and an individual (the apprentice) who wants to “earn while learning” a skilled occupation.
- An apprentice is a full-fledged employee of a sponsoring company and is required to complete 2,000 hours of supervised, on-the-job work experience in a specific occupation and a recommended 144 hours of related instruction for each year of the apprenticeship. The length of each apprenticeship varies, but the average length is 4 years.
- Successful completion earns the registered apprentice a nationally recognized certificate of completion as a journey-level worker. It also earns the sponsoring company, a loyal and highly productive employee.

For more information on an apprenticeship program in your place of business, contact Patty Moore with the Department of Labor at (276) 676-5465

VHCC to Offer Three New Degree Programs

VHCC has enhanced its program offerings to include Associate of Applied Science Degrees in Computer Numerical Control Machine Operations, Electrical Technology, and Air Conditioning, Heating & Refrigeration.

VHCC officially will begin offering these new degree programs in Fall Semester 2008, which begins in August, but students can take some required general education courses during the summer, May said.

For additional information, please contact May at (276) 739-2432 or rmay@vhcc.edu.



ESL = English As a Second Language

Now you can offer English to your group or your employees...on-site, at your place of business or other organization! Our instructors come to you!

Each of the programs has been approved by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia and will be offered during the 2008-2009 academic year, said Robert May, dean of the Division of Science and Engineering Technology.

“We’ve offered certificate and diploma programs in these areas for many years, but we began pursuing the degree programs at the request of students and employers,” May said. “Many companies will only consider applicants with a college degree, and others use a degree as criteria for a promotion within the workplace. We think this is going to make our graduates more employable and provide additional opportunities for advancement.”

The long-established certificate and diploma programs will still be offered, May said, noting that these programs can be completed in a shorter period of time and include fewer general education courses than the degree programs. Students who pursue the associate degree programs will take many of the same courses but also will be required to complete courses in social sciences, humanities and physical education. The degree programs typically can be finished in two years.

So many businesses in the United States are realizing the importance of investing in English



(Participants from a class held in Galax, VA)

Instruction for their employees who speak English as a Second Language. We offer group **English classes on-site** at your place of business.

Call us for all your ESL Solutions. We provide experienced, qualified, and highly talented ESL instructors who love to teach! We are ready to offer solutions to all language problems through our specialized ESL courses. For more information, call Susan Seymore, Mount Rogers Regional Adult Education Program, 276 739-2547 or email: sseymore@vhcc.edu.

The Center for Business & Industry

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Join our Summer Leadership Institute

Essential Skills of Leadership 24697

Whether you are a first time leader or an experienced manager, it seems there is a new challenge waiting just around the corner in our fast paced world of work. Come join other leaders in our community as we explore the foundations of leadership that will enable you to lead your team toward a shared, common goal – success! • *Tuesday, June 17, 12:00PM-4:00PM • Cost: \$69 • SWVA Higher Ed • Taylor*

Effective Discipline 24699

Are you frustrated as a supervisor in dealing with problem behaviors? SHRM Professional **Joe Pendergast** will provide you with the tools necessary to dramatically these behaviors. By involving team members in the performance discussions and gaining their commitment to behavioral change, you can turn a potentially negative interaction into a positive developmental step. • *Tuesday, June 24, 12:00PM-4:00PM • Cost: \$69 • SWVA Higher Ed • Pendergast*

Time Management: Removing Barriers to Your Productivity 24701

Who ever has enough time? In this one day workshop, you'll use the DISC Time Mastery Profile® to assess your own time management effectiveness. Then you'll learn how to set priorities and look more carefully at how you use your time to improve productivity at work and reduce the stress in your life. • *Tuesday, July 15, 8:30AM-5:00PM • Cost: \$139 • SWVA Higher Ed • Springer*

Training thru Coaching for Managers 24700

Developing Others

Struggling with the costs of turnover? Challenged to find good talent for a new position? Why not focus on developing the talent you already have within your own four walls. This workshop will provide you with tools to help others expand their capabilities. You can help others develop the confidence to take on a new challenge, work independently and be a true asset to your organization. • *Tuesday, July 8, 12:00PM-4:00PM • Cost: \$69 • SWVA Higher Ed • Taylor*

Essential Skills of Communication 24695

Say what? Communication challenges are documented as the number one struggle in the workplace. Communicating clearly with employees and customers is critical to the success of your business. Come learn how to improve one-on-one communication between you are your team members and watch productivity climb. • *Tuesday, June 10, 12:00PM-4:00PM • Cost: \$69 • SWVA Higher Ed • Springer*

Meetings Made Easy: 24703

How to Lead Effective Meetings

The word meeting gets a bad wrap. Meetings are considered by some to be a necessary evil. But the key to an effective meeting is an effective leader and facilitator. In this 8 hour workshop, you'll learn the skills that facilitators need to lead effective, results oriented meetings. • *Tuesday, July 22, 8:30AM-5:00PM • Cost: \$139 • SWVA Higher Ed • Duffield*

Register today by calling CBI at (276) 739-2496.