WorkforceLINK

SUMMER 2006

Peninsula Council for Workforce Development

From the **Chairman's Perspective**

Turning dreams into reality

By Dr. Robert P. Leber
Chairman, PCWD & GPWIB

It is always energizing to be part of an endeavor that starts as a creative thought, then transitions into a realistic vision, leading to a successful application. In the business community, this scenario is fostered by creative environments that encourage employees to search for new ideas that are superior to the ones currently in use. In the public sector, this creative environment is just as important to encourage the cooperation and collaboration required to successfully turn region-wide dreams into reality.

An excellent example of a public initiative that successfully transitioned through this scenario is the Youth Career Café at the Coliseum Mall in Hampton. The project evolved from a concept into reality thanks to the leadership of Sandy Donaldson, chairperson of the Greater Peninsula Workforce Investment Board's Education and

(See CHAIRMAN on page 2)

Career café whets the appetite of youth workforce

The center's purpose is twofold: it helps train youth and it produces what employers desire most — future employees with workplace skills.

So far, more than 350 young people between the ages of 14 and 21 have sampled the menu at the Youth Career Café at Coliseum Mall. And it's only been open since May.

The 1,700-square-foot center, which can comfortably fit about 40 people, is the result of a five-year effort among PCWD, area schools, and local businesses and organizations to create a place where current and former high school students can explore career options to put them on track for the future.

Part of PCWD's real-world initiative, the Youth Career Café focuses on career exploration and opportunities for young people ages 14 to 21.

The players are many: Hampton public schools loaned the center a dozen computers and will soon supply an employee to assist in staffing it. The café's melting pot of support came from various civic organizations and businesses including the Junior League of Hampton Roads Provisional Class of 2006, Public WiFi Project of Hampton, Thomas Nelson Community College, the Virginia Career Education Foundation, Junior Achievement and the U.S. Army National Guard among others too numerous to mention.

"The café's main purpose is to provide resources to help young people develop workplace readiness skills," says Julianna Sarr, the PCWD workforce development manager who was largely responsible for getting the café up and running. "We've examined what the public schools are already offering in the way of career readiness activities and now we're exploring ways the business community can add value to those existing programs." Whether young people plan to continue their education by going to college or a trade school or head straight into the workplace, the café is a resource waiting to be tapped.

"We have weekly workshops that feature different industries," Sarr continues. "And we offer programs that will help sharpen the young people's writing, interviewing and speaking and listening skills, as well as help them with problem solving, decision making and computer literacy." There are also many

(See CAREER CAFÉ on page 2)

PENINSULA COUNCIL
For Workforce Development

Chairman's Perspective

(Continued from page 1)

Training Committee, and the focus and tenaciousness of Julianna Sarr, a workforce development manager with the PCWD.

Sandy fostered the necessary environment and Julianna made things happen. The effort has involved many local organizations including the Hampton Public School System, the Junior League Provisional Class of 2006, Modern Environments, Creative Office Environments, Kara Hughes Designs, Alternatives Inc. Hampton Coalition for Youth, Newport News Office on Youth Development, Chesapeake Investment Group, Blue Talon Inn, The Apprentice School, Riverside School of Health Careers, Junior Achievement and representatives from the area armed services.

The result is the greater Peninsula community now has a 1,700-square-foot site "just for youth" that offers a wide variety of materials and computer-based resources for young adults who want to learn more about educational and employment opportunities in our region. Adults also can benefit from this "One-Stop Career Center" for young people, and many parents have visited the site to get material to help guide their children.

I encourage all of you to visit the Youth Career Café and to help expand the concept to other shopping malls in our region. Finally, please join me in congratulating Sandy, Julianna and all of their supporters for successfully transitioning this wonderful concept into reality.

During the Youth Career Café's opening day celebration May 18, the Junior League of Hampton Roads Provisional Class of 2006 presented a $3,000 check to the center. Seen here Chrystal Holloway (far left), president of the Young American Broadcasters, and Matthew James (far right), president and CEO of PCWD, accept the check from provisional class representatives Dawn Striepe and Kara Hughes.

Career café

(Continued from page 1)

Web-based tools available, including a tutorial on how to write a resume.

In addition to the student-oriented services, the café also offers workshops to parents outlining alternative paths to rewarding careers.

Local businesses are invited to provide volunteers to facilitate workshops for the youth. "We're encouraging businesses to host workshops at their sites to expose the young people to different surroundings," Sarr says. "We'll get the kids there if they want to hold it on their premises. Or they can come here to the mall."

Sarr says they're also encouraging employers to let the café know about such things as internships, summer jobs and available volunteer positions. Businesses that would like to post these opportunities are urged to e-mail the information to CareerCafe@pcfwd.org. The listings, as well as the services to the youth, are currently free.

For more information on how your business or organization can become involved, call the Youth Career Café at (757) 826-3804. The café is open Monday through Saturday.

Construction academy aims to curtail shortage of skilled labor

For the past year, PCWD members have been carefully assembling a certification program to help alleviate the construction industry's shortage of skilled labor. Now they're ready to launch. In August, the Peninsula Construction Academy will offer its first classes at the New Horizons Regional Education Center in Hampton.

Part of the Level 1 certificate curriculum, classes will focus on workforce readiness skills and safety training. Students will be introduced to their choice of three of five skilled training areas: masonry, concrete finishing, carpentry, electrical and plumbing. They'll get hands-on training by completing a construction project on the New Horizon campus, and they'll also receive related computer instruction.

The Level 2 certificate, to be offered in the near future, will focus on developing supervisory skills. It will concentrate on an apprenticeship in the skilled training area that interests the individual the most and will include related instruction in areas such as blueprint reading. Both level programs will be offered at night to allow students to hold day jobs while they learn a new trade.

"It's different from traditional programs because the curriculum is reversed," explains Dick Moyers, executive director of the Associated General Contractors of Virginia. Students don't have to take courses that appear to be irrelevant to their area of interest, he continues. "They first concentrate on studying the skill areas. If they later decide they want to go beyond the certification level, they can take the needed courses to get an associate's degree at the tail end of the program."

Students learn at their own pace and all credits matriculate to the next level. "We wanted to set up a program that would be attractive to youth out of high school as well as their parents," says Sybil Wheatley, director of human resources for W.M. Jordan Co. "We wanted to give the youth an opportunity not to just learn a trade but to develop a career." The program is also geared for workers in the field, she adds, who can further their education and become more valuable to their current employers.

The academy will teach students much more than mere entry-level skills. "This is not just about learning to use a hammer and saw," she explains. "The academy eventually will have a third-level certificate to help students achieve management positions. In the long run if they're motivated enough, they could end up owning their own business a few years after completing the program."

In August, the Peninsula Construction Academy will offer its first class at the New Horizons Regional Education Center in Hampton.

Helping to connect the right person with the right job is part of what Peninsula Worklink is all about. Here are the stories of two people who took positive strides to become viable components of the Peninsula's workforce, thanks to the help of PW counselors and its business partners.

It's good to be 60

by Wanda Boulden, counselor

After almost a year of unemployment, Ms. B came to PW in January 2005. She had been job searching since July 2004 when she was laid off as the director of Homebase of the Peninsula. At 59, she had a wealth of experience in her field, but she lacked a college degree. This was a major stumbling block, and PW determined she was a good candidate for training funding. In the meantime, Ms. B continued to work closely with her career development specialist, actively seeking employment.

Her funding was approved and she began attending Old Dominion University in fall 2005. Things looked a bit grim that December when ODU informed her that her curriculum had changed and she would not be able to complete her degree in the time allotted by the Workforce Investment Act. Ironically, this worked out to her advantage.

As fate would have it, ODU had a free-tuition program for individuals 60 years and older who met certain income guidelines. Ms. B turned 60 in December 2005.

And the story has a very happy ending. She continued her studies at ODU, all the while continuing her job search. In early 2006, Thomas Nelson Community College advertised the need for a grants specialist. Ms. B applied, was interviewed and hired at a very satisfying salary. She started her new job this past March.

Realizing the importance of a diploma

by Linda Cullinan, counselor

Life was not easy for Ms. D, who seemed to encounter one roadblock after another. The single mother and her son lived with her father in Hampton. She had dropped out of high school at the end of her junior year. After earning $280 per week as a customer service representative for a local cleaners, she realized she needed her GED to better support her family.

With careful consideration, Ms. D decided to pursue an External Diploma rather than a GED. For those of you unfamiliar with this program, students complete most of the work at home with little supervision. Once a week they meet with an instructor who reviews their progress.

Needless to say, to be successful participants must be very disciplined. And Ms. D was. Thanks to her perseverance, she finished the program with flying colors. In June, she received her high school diploma.

Currently, she is pursuing her dream of bettering her life for her and her son. She's applied to the CAD program with Northrop Grumman Newport News.

Determination is definitely one of her virtues and she never let her various setbacks get in the way of achieving her goal. She continually strives to make a better life for her and her young son. Ms. D has been a definite pleasure to work with.

Governor's senior adviser addresses Peninsula Council

Danny LeBlanc, senior adviser to Gov. Tim Kaine, was the featured guest at the PCWD meeting May 17 at the Peninsula Workforce Development Center on Butler Farm Road. After a tour of the center and the Youth Career Café at Coliseum Mall, he praised council members for their hard work and efforts to create an effective and efficient workforce system for the Peninsula. LeBlanc said he was most impressed with the partnerships and cooperation of all the entities involved, adding that they should be a model for the rest of the state.

During his visit with the council, LeBlanc also distributed the *Workforce Development Blueprint: Defining Virginia Workforce Needs 2012.* This document is the Virginia Workforce Council's first step in the process of determining Virginia's workforce needs and subsequent workforce development strategies.

Dr. Robert Leber, council chairman and director of education for Northrop Grumman, invited Danny LeBlanc to visit again. Leber offered the council's support for pertinent projects and urged LeBlanc to use the Peninsula system as a sounding board and test market in the very near future.

The Peninsula Council for Workforce Development's chairman, Dr. Robert Leber (left), and its president and CEO, Matthew James (right), take the opportunity to thank Danny LeBlanc, the governor's senior adviser for workforce development, for being the guest speaker at the council's May 17 meeting.

The Peninsula Council Executive Committee gathers around Danny LeBlanc when he had completed addressing the group.

PENINSULA COUNCIL
For Workforce Development
21 Enterprise Parkway, Suite 200
Hampton, VA 23666
www.pcfwd.org

PRE-SORTED
STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
HAMPTON, VA
PERMIT NO. 34

Save the date

Plan on attending PCWD & GPWIB's annual meeting at noon WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 20, at the NEWPORT NEWS MARRIOTT in Oyster Point

PCWD: Conducting the Work of the Greater Peninsula Workforce Investment Board

Members deliver talks on new career café and construction academy

Members of the Peninsula Council for Workforce Development made two presentations at the High Five conference April 24-25 in Glen Allen. Sponsored by the Virginia Career Education Foundation, the conference's focus was on celebrating best partnership practices in career and technical education.

The presentation titled "Preparing an Emerging Workforce: A Model for Collaboration" centered on the Youth Career Café, which officially opened for business May 18. Julianna Sarr, a PCWD workforce development manager, and Dr. Robert Leber with Northrop Grumman in Newport News discussed how educators, businesses and community organizations partnered with PCWD and its strategic allies to successfully create the café.

Sybil Wheatley, director of human resources for W.M. Jordan Co., and vice chair of the council, delivered a presentation introducing the concept of the Peninsula Construction Academy. She explained how by combining education with technical training and partnering with businesses the academy will offer a career pathway into the industry. Youth or incumbent workers will receive certification in their chosen trade as well as the opportunity to earn an associate's degree from the local community college.

On June 8 in Newport News, Wheatley and J. Joseph Johnson, executive director of the New Horizons Regional Education Center, delivered another talk on the Peninsula Construction Academy at a breakfast meeting of the Peninsula District Associated General Contractors of Virginia. The presentation included what Peninsula AGC member companies are doing to address the shortage of qualified construction workers.

This just in

At press time, Sybil Wheatley reports she just received word that the VCEF awarded the Peninsula Construction Academy a $5,000 partnership mini-grant.

(Far left) Sybil Wheatley, director of human resources for W.M. Jordan Co., recently attended the High Five conference in the Richmond area where she delivered a presentation on the Peninsula Construction Academy.

Peninsula partnerships pay off

The Virginia Workforce Council recently awarded Peninsula Workforce Area 14 incentive award funds totaling $52,500. To receive this funding, the One-Stop centers, which operate as Peninsula Worklink, and the other partners met or exceeded all 17 performance measures for performance year 2004. This automatically qualified the Peninsula system for the Exemplary Performance and Most Improved awards. Peninsula Worklink is managed by Thomas Nelson Community College (TNCC) as the lead agency, as well as the Virginia Employment Commission and the New Horizons Regional Education Center.

Peninsula Area 14 also received the Local Coordination Award for operating the manufacturing pipeline high-growth initiative. This is a partnership between Northrop Grumman, TNCC, the other One-Stop partners and the manufacturing community.

The Future Fest program and campaign that included partnerships with the council, WTKR and Opportunity Inc. was honored with the Regional Cooperation Award.

Of the $300,000 awarded to the possible 12 of 17 workforce areas that applied, Peninsula Area 14 received the highest amount. These funds may be used for local coordination activities, regional cooperation activities or to provide services to target population.