

Bevill Kicks Off M3 Training

PICKENS, AL -- M3 training at Bevill State Community College appeals to Jack Jones of Aliceville. "I have been working in the construction industry for over 10 years," he said. "This training will allow me to not only gain an additional skill set but also the credentials that are so crucial and essential in today's job market."



Jack Jones learns new technical skills at Bevill State Community College

Jones is one of 15 students seeking new beginnings by enrolling in BSCC's Modern Multi-Skilled Manufacturing (M3) training and credentialing program in Pickens County. The 12-week training class in production manufacturing and basic industrial maintenance began in late December. Students that complete the program can earn an M3 Production Level I Credential that is recognized regionally as documentation of an individual's skill level in production manufacturing.

The college offers this course for free, at night in Carrollton for individuals looking for work or interested in learning skills for a new job. Students can also practice their skill development online using the Amatrol Anytime Anywhere e-Learning System that supports the training.

Charles Ireland, who coordinates the training for BSCC, has encouraged individuals at all skill levels to attend this class due to the variety of topics cov-

ered. The topics covered include safety, communication, computer usage, electrical circuits, measurement tools, pneumatics, hydraulics, automation operations, blueprint reading, and statistical process control in a manufacturing context.

Another advantage of this training, according to Ireland, is Eric Seals, the instructor. Seals is an engineer and field representative for Marathon Equipment Company. His work in business and industry assists in providing the hands-on as well as academic knowledge needed for the students to be successful.

Ireland believes that students who graduate and receive their M3 certification have an advantage over other applicants when searching for a manufacturing job.

"The M3 credential demonstrates to employers that the potential employees have core technical skills and knowledge to perform the job," he said. "It is a good investment for the company to hire trained and skilled workers upfront. It saves the company time and money on training in the future."

BSCC's offering is made possible by a grant under the Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED) Initiative as implemented by the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment & Training Administration and the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs.

Additional training opportunities will be offered throughout Bevill State's service area in the upcoming months.



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WestAlabama-EastMississippi

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"Incredible Work" Says Visiting Researcher

MERIDIAN -- "You've done some incredible work as a region," said Chandra Larson, a Social Scientist from Oakland, CA, as she addressed a group of West Alabama-East Mississippi (WAEM) community college partners. As part of a team from Social Policy Research Associates (SPRA), Chandra visited the WAEM Region to examine the trends, needs, and opportunities regarding workforce training.

"This session provided WAEM leaders a great opportunity to compare and benchmark our efforts and activities with other regions who face similar challenges," said Roger Whitlock, Workforce Director at East Central Community College. "This was an excellently facilitated exercise that allowed community colleges to gain perspective from across the country, re-assess our service provisions, and adapt to utilize 'best practices' for investing our funds in the best interest of this region's people."

According to Vinz Koller, Director of Training and Technical Assistance and Senior Social Scientist at SPRA, the WAEM Regional Initiative is one of just four nationwide to receive an on-site visit from the group, which is a national technical assistance pro-

vider funded by the Department of Labor. The goal of this assistance is to provide expanded economic opportunities to disadvantaged and hard-to-reach populations. Specific suggestions on how the region might meet this goal will be included in the group's final report, due out by late Spring.

Jason Dedwylder, Director of External Funding at Jones County Junior College, agreed that the meeting was very productive. "The inclusion of mapping techniques provided participants with valuable information as the WAEM region

moves forward to better equip the area workforce to compete in the global marketplace."

Koller and Larson also discussed sustaining the WAEM Regional Initiative and explored future opportunities for the region. Felecia Pettway, Civic Leadership Facilitator at Wallace Community College Selma, agreed with the importance of continuity. "We have an interest in continuing the current WAEM Alliance to both strengthen and continue to build our communities. As a regional team, we feel that we can continue to share ideas, resources, and foster needed relationships that will move an economically deprived region forward."



Vinz Koller ponders a point

Innovative Training at ECCC Provide A+ Technicians

DECATUR, MS – An innovative “hybrid-online” training class at East Central Community College yielded 11 newly certified technicians for seven businesses. Three participated from Alabama. These certifications represent the pinnacle of ECCC’s commitment to providing stackable credentials to qualified workers.

“The A+ Certification is just one of the stackable, industry-recognized credentials such as the Career Readiness Certificate and the Modern Multi-Skill Manufacturing Credential being offered through the East Central’s Employee Comprehensive Certification Center or EC3,” said Roger Whitlock, Dean of Workforce Development. “This capacity was made possible through ECCC’s affiliation with the WAEM Regional Initiative.”

The 11 employees completed an A+ Technician hybrid-online training class, made possible through a partnership with East Central Community College’s Workforce Development Center and the MSU Research and Curriculum Unit, and then successfully passed the CompTIA A+ Certification exam. The latter exam was conducted at ECCC’s Distant Learning Lab that also serves as a Pearson VUE Authorized Testing Site, located on ECCC’s main campus in Decatur, MS.

“Now certified, these technicians have the ability to install, configure, diagnose, and perform preventive maintenance on computers along with basic networking skills confirmed through this international, vendor-neutral certification recognized by major hardware and software vendors, distributors, and resellers” said Whitlock.

“Three of us from Alabama were only able to benefit

from this class due to the creative outreach instructional format arranged through this WAEM-college/university partnership,” said Nichole D’Andrea of Thomasville, AL. “The class was made convenient, affordable and was effective in preparing us for these impressive credentials,”

David Case, ECCC Director for Technology Management, served as instructor. For more information on this class and others being offered as a result of the WAEM Regional Initiative, contact Kyle James, ECCC Workforce Development Center Information Technology Specialist; Phone 601-635-6433 or call toll free, 1-877-462-3222, ext. 433; or Case, Phone 601-635-6354. Their email addresses are kjames@eccc.edu or dcase@eccc.edu.



Pictured receiving CompTIA Certification are, from left, Will Booker, Nichole D’Andrea, and Jody Williamson.

WET Fund and EMCC Do Important Work

By BILL CRAWFORD

Reprinted from The Commercial Dispatch

Thumbs up, Legislature, for prompt action to avoid a catastrophe in workforce training.

On day one, the House and Senate adopted a bill authored by Sen. Dean Kirby to preserve the \$20 million Workforce Enhancement Training (WET) Fund. Fast approval of complex legislation is highly unusual.

But failure to act would have disrupted workforce training throughout the state.

You see, the WET Fund provides money to community and junior colleges to train workers. It represents Mississippi’s abiding commitment to provide a highly skilled workforce for business and industry. It undergirds job creation and retention, both desperately needed at this time.

Surplus unemployment taxes financed the WET Fund, a surplus eroded by the long lines drawing unemployment checks. Kirby’s bill removes the surplus requirement to keep funds flowing.

And also sustains the great momentum Mississippi’s community and junior colleges have built in providing innovative, demand-driven workforce training. We all know the Toyota story, let me tell you another.

In 2007, Sara Lee closed in West Point, terminating over 1,600 loyal employees...many with less than a high school education and minimal technical skills. Into the fray jumped East Mississippi Community College along with the state’s Rapid Response unit and local WIN Job Center. But business as usual, the college knew, would not suffice.

“The challenge was not to offer training, but to effectively train and get people into jobs in a realistic timeframe,” explained EMCC vice president Dr. Raj Shaunak.

So, EMCC crafted an intensive, modern manufacturing training program with four key elements: 1) preparation for Career Readiness Certificates (CRCs) augmented with Adult Education and Basic Skills training; 2) simultaneous training in basic components of the Modern Multi-skill Manufacturing (M3) Credential; 3) enrollment in the Amatrol Anytime Anywhere e-Learning System; and 4) using “navigators” to move participants from entry, through training and education, and into jobs.



EMCC provided leadership to help bring CRC assessments to Mississippi, in developing the M3 Credential, and in designing the Amatrol-based e-learning system. It would now take the lead in implementing a new best practice – the role of “navigator,” a role designed through research at the National Institute for Rural Community Colleges at Mississippi State University.

Navigators, intensive scheduling, and innovative training systems improved EMCC’s completion rate from 60% to over 90%. Over 50% of Sara Lee workers re-trained got jobs within six months. Wow!

Today, Severstal, American Eurocopter, PACCAR, Aurora Flight Systems, and Stark Aerospace depend upon EMCC’s modern manufacturing program, calling it a “solid foundation.”

This EMCC story can be matched by other colleges. The WET Fund helps our community colleges do great things for people and companies who need it. Thanks Legislature!

Health Care Training Grant to Benefit Region

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Labor announced Friday that The Montgomery Institute and partners will receive \$4.5 million over three years to implement a model training and residency program for approximately 1,000 Health Care workers in East Mississippi and West Alabama.

"The Recovery Act's investments are making a positive difference in the lives of America's working families," said Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis. "The Recovery Act funded grants announced today will ensure thousands of workers across the nation can receive high-quality training and employment services, which will lead to good jobs in health care and other industries offering career-track employment and good pay and benefits."

Grants were awarded in each of the 50 states. The Montgomery Institute received the grant for Mississippi. Calhoun Community College received the grant for Alabama.

Exactly four years ago, the Institute and partners were awarded a \$15 million Department of Labor WIRED grant for workforce training in West Alabama and East Mississippi.

"We do these things in Sonny Montgomery's name for the benefit of this region," said Bill Crawford, president of the charitable organization named for the late Congressman. "Over 90% of this grant will go to our training partners – East Mississippi, East Central, and Meridian Community Colleges – our employer partners – Rush Health Systems, Alliance Health Center, and East Mississippi State Hospital – and our coordinating partner – the East Mississippi Area Health Education Center to provide training and support for people in our region seeking health-care careers."



Through this project, The Montgomery Institute and partners plan to implement a model nurse career ladder and residency program that will train and prepare participants for jobs in the nursing industry. Their comprehensive approach includes a number of key strategies including: 1) implementation of a Nursing Career Lattice Program; 2) recruitment, training, and placement of unemployed and dislocated workers into Certified Nurse Aid positions; 3) improving basic skills of participants; 4) upgrading skill levels of low wage incumbent workers; 5) building career ladders; 6) enhancing opportunities and resources for advancement; and 7) reducing turnover. The partnership will develop customized curricula and train and place approximately 1,000 dislocated and incumbent workers in Health Care occupations.

Secretary Solis' announcement marks the sixth and final round of competitive grants made available for employment and training through the Recovery Act. Projects funded through these grants will be conducted in partnership with the public workforce system, businesses and other organizations to guarantee that training leads to jobs.

Enterprise-Ready is a publication of the WAEM Regional Initiative. For questions, comments, ideas and/or stories about this publication contact: tmquestions@gmail.com



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Building an Enterprise-Ready Region

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Philadelphia Future Emerges From Past

PHILADELPHIA, MS – Philadelphia's infamous past may be key to its economic future.

At least that's what community design specialist Randy Wilson learned from a three-day charrette with 59 community leaders. Wilson has worked on charrette teams in a number of cities and towns across the South, but his work on this week's charrette in Philadelphia, Mississippi took him to new level.

"Philadelphia has been the site of some of the most complicated racial issues in our country's history," said Wilson. "But when you look at the progress that has been made here, it is almost unbelievable."



Tripp Muldrow, an urban planner specializing in historic and tourism development, presents his recommendations at the Philadelphia Charrette final presentation meeting.

The Philadelphia of today is a stark contrast to its past. From a history highlighted by a civil rights slaying and chronic Indian unemployment, Philadelphia has rebounded to a progressive city with an African-American Mayor abutting a thriving Choctaw Indian reservation.

"Our citizens take great pride in our community, and we do not shy away from our unique history. We have faced the past and learned from it," said Pat

Thomasson of Thomasson Lumber. "This charrette will help us plan for our future and let us share this great place with others."

The charrette was a three-day, intensive design-oriented workshop that focused on the community's assets and was steered by citizen input. Under the management of Mississippi Main Street, design specialists from as far away as South Carolina and Maryland teamed up with state and local experts to devise a community development and branding program for the city.

Because of the city's rich history, several of the charrette team's suggestions focused on cultural tourism.

"Philadelphia is rich in assets and is primed to take advantage of many opportunities," said Jan Miller, Central District Director for Mississippi Main Street. Tripp Muldrow, an urban design and tourism specialist at Arnett, Muldrow, and Associates in South Carolina, suggested developing a tourism strategy aimed at Philadelphia's successful reconciliation of the past to the present.

"Prior to this week I had no idea what a charrette really was," exclaimed Steve Wilkerson, owner of "Steve's on the Square" clothing store. "The presentation opened my eyes to what we really have here... and I have lived here all of my life! Thanks to Philadelphia Main Street, Mississippi Main Street, and East Central Community College for sponsoring this event. Now let's go to work."

Philadelphia's charrette is one of a series in West Alabama and East Mississippi funded by the WAEM Regional Initiative through funding provided by the U.S. Department of Labor.

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Institute's "Rural Place Building" Program Earns "Innovator Award" for Mississippi

MERIDIAN, MS – The Montgomery Institute will receive the Southern Growth Policies Board "2010 Innovator Award" for Mississippi at its 13-state conference in Kentucky this June.

"The Montgomery Institute's important work to enhance the economic vitality of the West Alabama-East Mississippi region is exemplary," said Governor Haley Barbour, trustee and past chairman of the Southern Growth Policies Board. "I congratulate TMI on its successful efforts to build great rural places and wealth through entrepreneurship, even during these challenging economic times."

Ted Abernathy, executive director of the Southern Growth Policies Board (SGPB), said the Institute's innovative Rural Place Building Program was the basis for the award.

"I am pleased to inform you that The Montgomery Institute has been selected to represent Mississippi as the winner of the Southern Growth Policies Board 2010 Innovator Award," he said. "Your program, Rural Place Building, was chosen from a strong pool of nominees in the Southern region as an outstanding initiative that helps communities recover from the economic downturn."

Founded in Meridian in the year 2000, The Montgomery Institute (TMI) has a mission to "upbuild people, places, programs, and the region of East Mississippi and West Alabama." Its Rural Place Building approach to development guided implementation of the West Alabama-East Mississippi WIRED Initiative as well as the MyBiz Alabama-Mississippi Network. During 2009, the Institute opened an Alabama office in Monroeville to strengthen its bi-state operations.

TMI will be publicly recognized on June 7, 2010 in an awards ceremony and reception during Southern Growth's Chairman's Conference in Lexington, Kentucky, along with award winners from

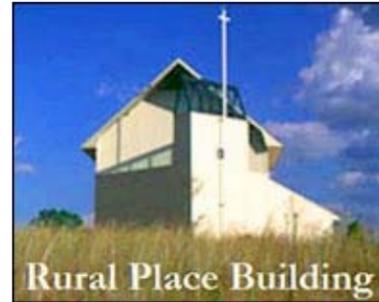
12 other states.

"We accept this honor on behalf of our many partners," said TMI president Bill Crawford. "Without them Rural Place Building would just be a title, not a series of accomplishments."

The Southern Growth Policies Board award resulted from a nomination process. TMI accomplishments leading to the award include:

1. WAEM Town/Main Street Charrettes/ Program Coordination:

- TMI and partners identified the Your Town Alabama program as a best practice for rural community development. TMI modeled "WAEM Town" after Your Town for its 37-county region. It brings design and development professionals together with local leaders at a three-day retreat to teach them fundamentals of asset building. TMI successfully handed off the WAEM Town program to the Community Action Team at Mississippi State University beginning in 2010.



- TMI and partners also identified as an innovative practice a charrette process developed and offered by the Auburn Urban Studio. It brings the WAEM Town approach directly to communities. TMI got Mississippi Main Street to adopt this process for Mississippi. To date, Carthage, Newton, Columbus, Noxapater, Heidelberg, Covington County, Marion, Philadelphia, and DeKalb have held charrettes in the WAEM Region. Main Street now offers these services statewide.

- TMI and partners worked to coordinate WAEMTown and the Main Street charrettes with the Mississippi State University's *First Impressions* program and the Mississippi Development Authority's Asset Development Program. Communities found a progression through *First Impressions* and Asset Building to design charrettes is highly beneficial.

2. MyBizAM and Entrepreneurship:

- TMI, working with community colleges, developed the innovative MyBiz Alabama-Mississippi Network and related website, MyBiz.AM. The goal is to aid communities in developing "grow your own" strategies as alternatives to plant recruitment.
- Coordinated by TMI, colleges have worked directly with 391 communities to develop "entrepreneur champions" and Start It! Cards as first steps to becoming "enterprise-ready."
- TMI developed the MyBiz.AM website with help from the University of Alabama to help rural communities better link entrepreneurs to the many support programs available. Today, 2,888 registered users can access 213 service providers through MyBiz.AM.



TMI initiated a multi-agency workgroup, encouraged by Governor Haley Barbour. It formulated a set of policy recommendations to enhance entrepreneurship and small business development in Mississippi – Balancing Recruitment With Entrepreneurship (BRWE). These recommendations have been completed and submitted agencies and policy groups for review.

3. Mayors Network/Regional Summits:

- RUPRI's Center for Regional Competitiveness says rural communities must design regional strategies to be competitive. TMI hosts quarterly meetings of mayors from 33 communities to focus on regional issues and strategies. TMI has also hosted regional summits on entrepreneurship, forestry, and regional competitiveness to help regional leaders understand opportunities and challenges.

TMI is in the process of revamping the Commission on the Future to serve as a successor leadership organization to the WAEM WIRED Commission appointed by Governors Haley Barbour and Bob Riley.

4. Regional Training Framework/Online Access/ Stackable Credentials:

- Another regional strategy developed by TMI and its partners focuses on building a competitive, regional, advanced manufacturing workforce. TMI and community college partners formed the WAEM Alliance, developed a regional training framework to guide investments, and crafted a regional advanced manufacturing credential based on national skill standards.
- TMI and partners designed the Modern Multi-skill Manufacturing (M3) Credential to prepare workers for a variety of advanced manufacturing jobs in the WAEM Region. High schools also utilize the program. A number of dual enrollment programs have been developed with community colleges.

Workers and students in rural areas are challenged to get to out-of-town training programs. The innovative Amatrol Anytime Anywhere e-Learning System developed by TMI and partners provides online access to over 450 virtual training modules. This allows individuals to access training at home, at the workplace, at libraries, and at one-stop career centers.