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FEATURED

Construction industry credentials provided for GA Construction Ready graduates

By Shalon Bell Mar 24, 2017



The Construction Ready Program at The Center for Working Families (TCWFI) recently graduated their fourth class at the Georgia Hill Neighborhood Center equipping students with construction industry credentials. (Photo by Shalon Bell)

The Construction Ready Program at The Center for Working Families (TCWFI) recently graduated their fourth class at the Georgia Hill Neighborhood Center, equipping each student with at least eight different construction industry credentials and access to employment in Atlanta's leading growth industry.

In partnership with the Construction Education Foundation of Georgia (CEFGA), a long-term neighborhood program focused on creating employment opportunities and job training for residents of Georgia, the Construction Ready program has developed an employer network of over 40 of Atlanta's top construction and safety companies.

CEFGA's Construction Ready program currently has three platforms throughout Georgia with programs at Westside Works designed for residents of Atlanta's 30314 and 30318 area codes, Build Cobb designed for Cobb County residents and TCWFI designed for residents of Atlanta in the 30310, 30312 and 30315 area codes.

Supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Atlanta Work Force Development Agency (AWDA) and Atlanta Career Rise, TCWFI is a leading non-profit that serves over 300 residents a month. The organization focuses on workforce development to create economic success for hard working families and their children.

Since the start of Construction Ready in 2014, the program has trained 462 metro Atlanta residents and placed 431 people in full time employment. Graduates have been placed with employers such as Mercedes Benz Stadium, Atlanta Beltline, State Farm Headquarters and other local and national projects.

The dynamic group of eight from the program's fourth graduating class this year received industry credentials such as the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) Core Credential which covers utilizing hand tools, power tools, construction math and more. The students also received certifications in CPR and fork lift training to name a few.

Family Economic Success Program Manager for TCWFI, Constance Willis said that she was grateful to partner with CEFGA in helping better the lives of other.

"How grateful we are to be in collaboration and partner with CEFGA in allowing us to help them help others," Willis said. "We are very proud of our outreach and are able to go into different communities and offer and talk about this service."

President and CEO of CEFGA, Scott Shelar was also present during the graduation ceremony to discuss the benefits of the program and encourage more men and women in the community to join Construction Ready despite any previous hardships they may have faced.

"Seventy-five percent of students have felonies or misdemeanors, we want everyone to know that having a felony does not eliminate you from the program," Shelar said. "Yes, we train, yes, our training leads to industry credentials, but at the end of the day, we judge ourselves on helping people find jobs and find careers."

The program also does a hiring fair where employers come in to meet the graduates and hire the trainees after students complete the four-week boot camp style training.

There is an eligibility criterion to get into the program including a literacy test, drug screening, background check, letter of recommendation and interview.

During the ceremony, graduates expressed their gratitude for the program and eagerness to start a new career. One graduate, Tarvis Andrews became teary eyed once he received his certificates and said the program made him a better person.

"I came from the streets hustling a lot, the only tools I ever worked with was a screw driver and a hammer, that's all I knew," Andrews said with tears falling down his face. "Coming into this class made me a better person and I can make a career now, I now know how to work with power tools, lasers, you name it. It's just a good program for everybody."

CEFGA also assigns the students to pathway coaches who make sure they have everything needed to prepare for jobs as far as the right attitude to aid them in completing their life goals such as housing, finances and child care.

Recently, the Construction Ready Program at Westside Works, received national recognition in the area of Workforce Development from the Construction Users Roundtable (CURT).

Westside Works is a cornerstone of Arthur Blank's vision to transform communities on Atlanta's Westside. Other partners critical to the success of Construction Ready at Westside Works are Integrity Transformations CDC and the Atlanta Workforce Development Agency (AWDA).

In addition to AWDA and The Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation, Westside Works financial investors include Enterprise Community Partners and several major construction employers.

According to CEFGA's website, residents are earning an average starting wage of \$12.60 per hour. Retention after 90 days is tracking at 82% and retention after 365 days is tracking at 70%. Westside Works graduates who remain employed for one year are reporting average wage increases of 8%.

Orientation sessions for the next class are scheduled for April 10, May 15, and June 19.

To learn more about the Construction Ready Program with CEFGA visit www.cefga.org.