

GGEDC Workforce Program celebrates first graduates

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Students expected to transfer into on-the-job training

At a time when the country is reaching out to other countries to fill a truck driver gap of 400,000 and a welder gap of 600,000, the Greater Gallup Industrial Workforce Program Leadership Team is working to make a dent in those numbers with its GGEDC Workforce Program.

“These are jobs that could be going to local people in local communities,” team member Kent Wilson said. “These are enormous opportunities for local people who are properly trained. A more qualified workforce means there are more business opportunities to expand and attract new business.”

At a Dec. 13 ceremony at El Morro Events Center, GGEDC celebrated the achievements of the first students enrolled in their recently-launched workforce training program.

Students in the Greater Gallup Industrial Workforce Program spent 400 hours over 10 weeks earning industry and safety certifications through classroom and hands-on training. The students also had on-site visits with local industrial employers such as Marathon Petroleum, Peabody Energy, and Rhino Health, LLC to learn associated skills.

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“We’re real proud of this program because it represents Gallup-McKinley County and our new workforce development team,” Wilson said.

These students are: Arman Martine, Anderson Skeets, Daniel Jaramillo, Floyd Shay, Jason Mitchell, Kyle Manuelito, Lamar Thompson, Michelle Pat, Rawlin Jacobs, Regina Bee, Shirley Lynn, and Vanessa Shebola.

Tommy Haws, GGEDC president, spoke about the first year. “The program came out of many years of planning, and I don’t think any of us imagined it could have been so successful, so quickly,” Haws said.

Wilson said the GGEDC sees the deficit in locally trained workers as an opportunity to present a solution to Gallup and McKinley County, and make them more valuable to business owners.

Jonathan Gonzalez, workforce development manager for GGEDC said, “This program came through because it was necessary, but these people made it happen. The curriculum we built was not easy. It’s 10 weeks to figure out five to six months worth of training and to be in position to get a job that’s going to be life-changing.”

Cumulatively, the graduates have run heavy equipment, done welding, and been part of the community with outreach and building construction in the program, Gonzalez said.

Each of the students ended the program with placement in on-the-job training with a number of local employers.

“I don’t think any of them are ready to stop,” Gonzalez added.

Jaramillo, one of the class leaders, spoke to the crowd about the experiences he and the rest of the class went through in the program.

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“This program is an accomplishment as much of an asset,” he said. “I went from being mediocrely skilled to knowing and mastering skills, gaining knowledge and certifications I’m proud of and worked hard to obtain.”

Jaramillo said the program is helpful to anyone wanting to expand their knowledge in a variety of fields.

New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions Cabinet Secretary Bill McCamley offered his congratulations to the class and spoke about the future workforce goals of the state.

“The governor wants programs like these around the state,” McCamley said. “Usually I have to urge people to do this thing, but McKinley County went and did this by themselves. You recognized there was an issue and you went to the business community and asked what they needed. You put together the program, and the success is evident.”

By Cody Begaye
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