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PSC partners with Escambia County, CareerSource ESCAROSA to teach construction skills

Free program open to residents ages 16-24

A few months ago, Kaleb Lymons barely knew how to use a hammer. Fast forward to now, the 19-year-old can operate a power drill, an air gun and even a miter saw.

“I had some basic knowledge of construction because I had a couple of friends in the field. I knew what a hammer was, but I had never built a structure,” said Lymons, a recent Escambia County Block-By-Block Program graduate.

The program – a partnership between Escambia County, Pensacola State College and CareerSource ESCAROSA – teaches high-demand construction skills to young adults ages 16 to 24. Qualified applicants attend 10 to 12 weeks of construction industry training at Pensacola State and can earn their National Center for Construction Education and Research Core (NCCER) – certification.

“The NCCER Core certification teaches important safety skills and basic operation of hand and power tools used in the construction industry,” said Mike Listau, PSC’s dean of Workforce Education. “This certification opens the door to securing a good job in the construction industry.”

Listau said the program includes classroom and actual hands-on training.

“With these skills, we are hoping that the graduates can get entry-level jobs in the construction industry,” Listau added.

Escambia County Workforce Development Manager Joe Glover said the Block-By-Block Program targets minorities, women and low-income residents.

“Our No.1 goal is to reach Escambia County residents in underserved communities. In many cases, these individuals don't have the funds to go to a trade school or are underemployed in jobs that will not sustain them or their families,” Glover said.

He added the Block-By-Block Program aims to tap into available resources, such as on-the-job training opportunities, and provide transportation, child care, and even personal training equipment to those in need.

“We want to remove all barriers that would hinder a resident’s success. We want to change the trajectory of their future and that of their families,” Glover said.

The next Block-By-Block class is set to begin in late June. To qualify for the program, applicants must be an Escambia County resident, pass a drug screening and remain drug-free. Applicants are not required to have construction experience, a high school diploma or GED. The program is also open to re-entry citizens.

To apply for the Block-By-Block program, email Glover at jaglover@myescambia.com, phone 850-572-1938, or visit the Brownsville Community Center at 3200 W. DeSoto St. in Pensacola. Glover's office is open 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Mugdim Basigovac, PSC’s Block-By-Block Program instructor, believes in the life-transforming program.

"We started with students with zero construction experience, but I would hire the four (Lymons, Jeremiah Bridges, Ja’vonte Manning and LaDarrian Nelson) who completed the course. They have so much potential,” said Basigovac, who earned his Carpentry Program certificate from Pensacola State.

“Along with coursework and hands-on training, these students built a tool shed from the ground up. They framed the structure, did all the roofing, blacking in, insulation, and installed siding on the exterior.”

Basigovac, a Bosnia native who served in the military for 24 years and worked with the U.S. Navy, said they were great students – once the students bought into the program.

“They wanted to know that we cared about them succeeding. Eventually, they all started showing up for class early and were excited about learning,” Basigovac added.

Lymons remembers when he first started the program.

“I used to come in with my headphones on watching YouTube. I wasn't expecting so much bookwork. It's about 20 percent bookwork and 80 percent hands-on. But I learned I had to earn my way into the workshop because safety matters,” recalled Lymons, who said he also learned the importance of teamwork, accountability and time management.

“Teamwork and accountability are the No. 1 things in this program. One small mishap can hurt someone really bad – such as if you drop a nail, pick it up.”

Lymons said Basigovac was also a life coach to the students.

“You need to listen to the instructor and gain the wisdom and knowledge they are sharing. During class, we would have conversations that diverged into different paths – financial, mental health, relationships. It was not just a class where you only learned construction skills. It was about friendship and mutual respect. 'Mr. Basig' was more of a life coach, and he is a great coach.”

Lymons also realized he had a natural aptitude for building scaffolds.

“It was like a big Lego set,” he said, admitting cross-brace scaffolding was a challenge, but he was able to master it.

“I learned so much about construction and myself. I recommend the Block-By-Block Program to anyone who wants to better themselves.”

Block-By-Block program graduates Kaleb Lymons, left, and Jeremiah Bridges installed flashing on a tool shed the students constructed from the ground up. The

program – a partnership between Pensacola State College, Escambia County and Career Source ESCAROSA – provides high-demand construction skills training to young adults ages 16 to 24. Also pictured is the Mugdim Basigovac, the Block-by-Block program instructor.

Will Rogers, LaDarrian Nelson, Kaleb Lymons and Jeremiah Bridges work on a tool shed while enrolled in the Block-By-Block program at Pensacola State College. The program – a partnership between the College, Escambia County and CareerSource ESCAROSA – provides high-demand construction skills training to young adults ages 16 to 24.

Block-By-Block program students built a tool shed while taking construction classes at Pensacola State College.

Escambia County Block-By-Block Program

For more information on the program, contact Joe Glover at jaglover@myescambia.com, 850-572-1938, or visit his office between 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Monday through Friday in the Brownsville Community Center at 3200 W. DeSoto St., Pensacola.