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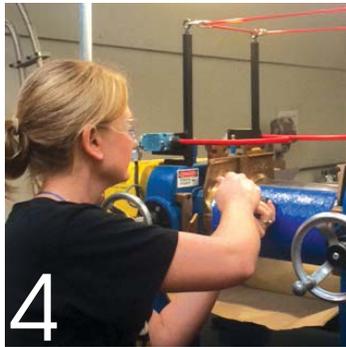


COLLEGE CREDIT FOR HEROES



TEACHING THE TEACHERS





4



6



5



9

Table of Contents

Teachers bring real-world industry skills to classroom teaching 4

Texas Veterans Leadership Program: Veterans helping veterans 5

Warriors to Workforce: College Credit for Heroes 6

Project Phoenix Takes flight 8

Preparing Texas Students for Tomorrow's Workforce 9

Workforce News 10

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New legislation transfers programs, creates new opportunities for workforce partnerships across Texas

By Chairman Andres Alcantar



The end of the 84th legislative session has brought significant changes to Texas Workforce Solutions and new opportunities to serve the people of Texas. The Sunset Commission review of our agency identified opportunities for improvement and resulted in a recommendation to continue the agency for the next twelve years. This was due in large part to the hard work of all our partners in the system.

The Sunset legislation transferred a number of important programs from the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) to Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) effective September 1, 2016. I will be joining officials from DARS on a statewide listening tour this summer as we seek public input related to the transition of these services. Stakeholder input will be used to ensure an effective and seamless transition of programs and to develop a combined state plan for programs governed by the newly enacted Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

The 84th Legislature also transferred the functions and duties of the Commission on Human Rights and the Purchasing Program for

People with Disabilities to TWC. We will work diligently with stakeholders to honor that trust placed on us by the Legislature.

The Jobs and Education Training (JET) program is also transferring to TWC effective September 1, 2015. JET will help high schools, community and technical colleges develop and deploy programs providing training to students in high-demand occupations and complements TWC initiatives that support dual-credit programs and Early College High School opportunities. We will also look to increase paid internship opportunities, while using the approved general revenue fund increases to significantly expand apprenticeship opportunities.

As we close the current fiscal year and begin a new one with added responsibilities, we take our leadership role very seriously and are committed to continuing to form and encourage partnerships that advance our mission. These partnerships will be built around economic priorities identified by leaders in regions across the state and will leverage the advantages provided by our state's strong business climate. Providing workers with the right skills will be a

priority as we move forward.

We will continue to identify new ways to improve the quality of child care while enhancing the quality and dynamism in our one stop centers. We will strive to provide more college credit for our veteran heroes and streamline career pathways as we provide employers with easier access to these talented individuals in all that we do. We will enhance career awareness tools available for our students and continue to provide customized training that meets the needs of our employers across the state. Our support for partnerships that allow noncustodial parents to work and pay child support will continue as we seek to build new partnerships that help Texans overcome barriers and achieve self sufficiency.

We will continue to listen and innovate to enhance outcomes for the people we serve. We will identify and implement strategies that work across communities to help Texas remain the leader in workforce solutions. We look forward to promoting a workforce system that creates value and offers opportunities for Texans to achieve and sustain economic prosperity. ■

Andres Alcantar | Chairman and Commissioner Representing the Public

Teachers bring real-world industry skills to classroom



Denison high school teacher Annie Means learned how chemicals are applied with plastics fabrication and during manufacturing commercial products at Presco Products in Sherman. Means took advantage of the weeklong hands-on training through TWC's Statewide Externship for Teachers initiative. *Photos courtesy of Workforce Solutions Texoma*

By Ronnie Burchett

Gaining firsthand knowledge about today's in-demand occupations gives teachers the insight to turn classroom lessons into real-world applications for their students. The Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) Statewide Externship for Teachers Initiative provides middle and high school teachers the opportunity to gain firsthand knowledge of the workforce skills they need to incorporate into their lesson plans.

In 2015, TWC distributed \$558,079 for externship programs which partner with local employers and independent school districts in eight local workforce development board areas. Some 430 educators are devoting a portion of their summer to participate in these programs.

One program facilitated by Workforce Solutions Texoma in Sherman will allow 31 junior high and high school teachers to spend a week immersed among professionals at some of the employers representing the largest industries located in Cooke, Fannin and Grayson counties. The teachers will learn about new technologies and operating practices utilized in manufacturing, health care and other industries.

"Teacher externships have been an important part of Texoma's strategic plan for many years, furthering the goal

of aligning business and education," said Workforce Solutions Texoma Executive Director Janie Bates. "Business leaders continue to support the program year after year because they see the value in providing our teachers an opportunity to shadow their employees. Teachers gain valuable insight into the requirements of business and industry, insights they use to connect their lesson plans to work readiness."

The goal of the externship program is to provide teachers with realistic experiences in an occupational setting. After spending a week at the jobsite, which includes participating in safety, job shadowing and hands-on training, the teacher will turn in a summary report of how to incorporate identified skills and understanding of the workplace environment into classroom curriculum.

Annie Means, a junior high school science teacher from Denison, was excited to participate in the program for a second year.

"The thing I love about the program is taking real-life experiences back to the classroom," Means explained. "Instead of just showing them in the book, I can encourage the kids to focus on a career in the science field. This gives them an idea of what is out there and how they can get a great job as an engineer or by obtaining

a certification."

The program also provides the business community with a better understanding of how the skills-based classroom material will better prepare students for a high-demand career opportunity. The Molded Fiber Glass (MFG) Texas plant in Gainesville hosted a chemistry teacher earlier this summer.

"This is a perfect setting for a chemistry teacher to see how the chemicals are actually applied at the plant," said MFG Materials Manager Brent Godshall. "We are excited to demonstrate to the teachers what their students can learn in the classroom and how it can relate to future careers. I think it is a really good opportunity to showcase the math and sciences and how it actually happens in the workplace."

The Externships for Teachers Initiative is funded through the Workforce Investment Act statewide funding and provides exposure to competencies in the workplace that will help prepare students by equipping them with valuable skills that will enable them to successfully embark on a career path. For more information on specialized services provided by Workforce Solutions Texoma, visit their website: workforcesolutionstexoma.com. ■



Veterans helping veterans

By Brenda Brantley

Support for veterans can come in many forms. At the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), that support comes in the form of fellow veterans.

Last fall, U.S. Air Force veteran Kandys Touchstone found herself in Texas with two children and only three bags of belongings. She was starting over after more than 12 years of military life, first as a serviceperson then as a military spouse. Touchstone quickly secured housing, but shortly after settling in Houston, she was hospitalized for approximately a month.

That was when the reality of transitioning to civilian life and the challenges of employment began to surface. The holidays were quickly approaching and Touchstone had exhausted her savings, was unable to find a job and faced possible eviction. Reluctantly but desperately, she reached out to a Veterans Resource and Referral Specialist through TWC's Texas Veterans Leadership Program (TVLP).

This unique program provides veterans with assistance in finding employment, education, job-training or referrals to other community veteran service organizations, and to state or federal programs. The TVLP's Veterans Resource and Referral Specialists are all veterans with firsthand knowledge and understanding about the challenges of transitioning into civilian life.

"Peer-to-peer support is very important in building relationships and trust," said TVLP Director Bob Gear. "Whatever the need is – short-term, long-term – every situation is unique, but with everyone working together, including our partners in other agencies,

this program works to connect veterans to the resources to meet those needs."

The Texas Veterans Leadership Program was formed in 2008 to serve as a resource and to provide referrals to returning veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation New Dawn, Operation Freedom's Sentinel, and Operation Inherent Resolve; however, the TVLP does not turn away any veteran seeking assistance.

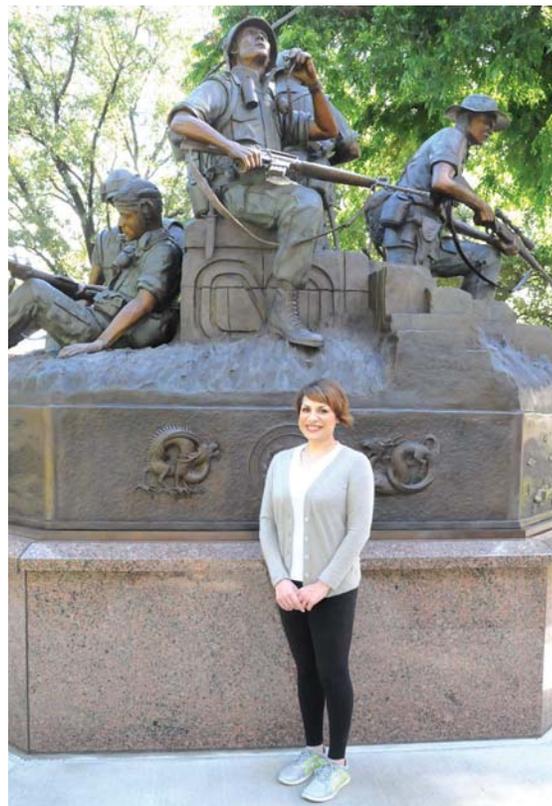
Touchstone connected with the Gulf Coast region's Veterans Resource and Referral Specialist Chris Howard who quickly provided her with resources and referrals to address the immediate issues – clothes, food, groceries and housing assistance.

Next, Howard helped Touchstone write her résumé and polish her interview skills. He was able to connect Touchstone with Nancy Agravante, a staffing specialist with Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast, who led her to job interviews and ultimately an employment opportunity with a state agency.

Recently, Touchstone was promoted and is now settling into her new life in Texas.

"Emailing the TVLP changed my life," said Touchstone. "I don't know where I would be right now without their help."

For Touchstone, the TVLP program provided her clear guidance during a very stressful time. She advises other veterans



Veteran Kandys Touchstone visits the Texas Capitol Vietnam Veterans Monument in Austin.

to seek assistance from the program.

"Just follow their directions. They really help and they really change lives," Touchstone said. "This was not just for me; this was also for my kids. They helped me to feed them and provide for them and that means everything."

Since its inception, the TVLP has reached out to more than 22,200 veterans and provided direct services to more than 18,000 veterans. For more on the TVLP, please visit: texasworkforce.org/txvlp. ■



Warriors to Workforce

“The experience has left me in awe of how veterans helping others to gain work experience while learning has made such a difference.”

By Justin Minsker

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) recently announced the expansion of College Credit for Heroes, awarding \$800,000 to support five new accelerated certificate or degree programs.

Launched as a pilot in 2011, College Credit for Heroes partners with 37 universities and community colleges throughout Texas that recognize the knowledge and skills gained by military service members and award college credits for their military experience, allowing these veterans to more easily transition into the civilian workforce. College Credit for Heroes was designated as a permanent program with the passage of SB 806 in the 84th Legislative Session.

“We are pleased to announce the new accelerated programs that demonstrate a commitment to launching innovative approaches to better recognize and credit the training and service of our veterans,” said TWC Chairman Andres Alcantar. “TWC and our partners will continue to replicate and scale programs that ease the transition of our heroes into Texas jobs.”

The additional colleges and universities will further expand the College Credit for Heroes initiative to locations throughout Texas. This new collaboration will increase the number of veterans and service members who can benefit from the accelerated educational programs for in-demand occupations.

One of the new participants in College Credit for Heroes, Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC), is developing an accelerated Veteran to Bachelor of Science in Nursing (VBSN) degree in which well-qualified veterans can complete program requirements in less than one year. Through rapid, online based curricula students can complete the VBSN degree at TTUHSC campuses located in Amarillo, Dallas and the Austin area beginning Spring 2016. Plans are to expand to Abilene and Odessa in 2017.

“We are grateful to the College Credit for Heroes Program for their cooperation, diligence and focus on helping our veterans in the classroom,” said Melinda Mitchell Jones, Associate Professor at TTUHSC. “Through this grant, we will be able to acknowledge the rigorous training these medics and corpsmen received in the military and provide them with the skills needed to rapidly place them into the workforce toward upward mobility.”

Other program grant partners that have recently developed accelerated curriculum include the Alamo Colleges, Grayson College, Texas State Technical College Harlingen and Lone Star College System. These partner schools are offering programs in fields of study including pharmacy technology, emergency



John Dornstadter Jr., U.S. Army Veteran and student in the Welding Program at Grayson College moving materials at Mueller Construction Company. Photo Courtesy of Grayson College.





Jimmy Burnett, U.S. Army veteran and student at Grayson College assembling a conveyor belt. *Photo courtesy of Grayson College*



U.S. Air Force Staff Sergeant Medic

medical technician, medical assisting, dental assisting, auto mechanics, industrial diesel technology, oil and gas drilling certifications and electrical technology.

“The experience has left me in awe of how veterans helping others to gain work experience while learning has made such a difference,” said Jimmy Burnett, U.S. Army veteran and Grayson College student who received college credit through the College Credit for Heroes program. “I was unsure of how my transition back to a normal life would be when I came home from my final tour in Afghanistan, but with the College Credit for Heroes program, I am confident it has been a good transition.”

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board also supports program expansion through advisement and consultation on various military and higher education related issues and coordination of program partnerships with higher education entities throughout the state.

The College Credit for Heroes website has received more than 30,000 visits and more than 17,000 service member and military veteran account holders had requested 1,919 evaluations for college credit. Texas veterans who used the website have been awarded an average of 25 college credit hours.

John Dornstadter, Jr. U.S. Army veteran and student in the Welding Program at Grayson College, has seen

success firsthand through the College Credit for Heroes program.

“I took for granted the challenges I would experience in trying to find a job. I attended multiple job fairs, completed several applications and was at my wits’ end. I applied to Grayson College to receive my Associates of Applied Science as well as other certifications,” said Dornstadter. “I was able to transfer certain credits through College Credit for Heroes. It means a lot to me to be given this opportunity.”

For a full list of participating colleges and academic opportunities available through College Credit for Heroes, visit: collegecreditforheroes.org. ■

PROJECT PHOENIX Takes flight

By Brenda Brantley

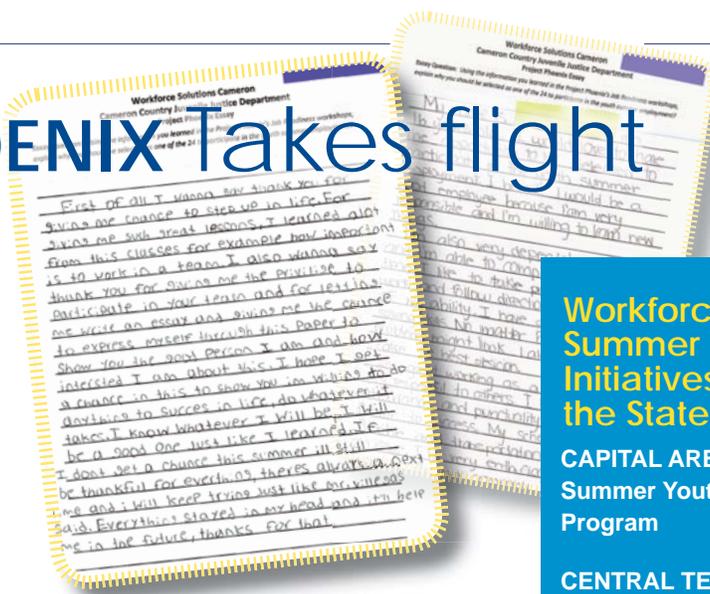
Helping teens and young adults obtain employment skills and gain firsthand knowledge about the working world is something that the Workforce Solutions network of service providers know is vital to their communities. During the summer these local workforce development boards amplify their efforts to recruit, train and provide experiences for young adults that will guide them throughout their careers. Workforce Solutions Cameron (Cameron), has developed a summer program which helps the typically underserved population of at-risk youth become career ready.

Cameron partnered with the Cameron County Juvenile Justice Department and Southwest Key Programs' Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program to offer career preparation and work-based learning experiences for 15 – 18 year olds in the juvenile justice system through a program called Project Phoenix.

“We are proud of the success Project Phoenix is having in serving this particular youth population through career search and employment training that will equip them with the skills sets that local businesses and industries are requesting,” said Cameron Executive Director Pat Hobbs.

Project Phoenix began to take root this spring through a mobile recruitment effort at the Cameron County Juvenile Justice Center and incorporated online tools and interactive activities to engage participants. Phase I included compressed workshops on soft skills and job readiness including an introduction to TWC online tools Texas Cares, Reality Check and Tracer which provide career awareness and guidance. Participants were also registered on WorkInTexas.com to connect to local employment opportunities. With the use of the Mobile Resources Lab, 107 participants attained completion certificates endorsed by Cameron.

During Phase II of Project Phoenix, participants were invited to write an essay to compete for a chance to participate in the Cameron summer enrichment



program. A total of 24 participants were provided job placement. A majority of the young adults were involved in beautification projects throughout the city, allowing participants to develop work-related skills while instilling a sense of pride in their community.

Regional Manager Henry Castillo says he was honored to watch the youth evolve and respond positively over the course of the project.

“I hope I get a chance in this (program) to show you I'm willing to do anything to succeed in life, and do whatever it takes; I know whatever I will be, I will be a good person — just like I learned.”

Excerpt taken from Project Phoenix participant's essay.

“Even the ‘toughest’ kids, who were standoffish and quiet at the onset, soon joined into lively discussions with their peers about soft skills. The essays reflected that the kids recognized that Project Phoenix provided the opportunity to better themselves and that they still had a bright future ahead, if they chose to pursue the right path,” says Castillo.

Cameron is already making plans for next year’s Project Phoenix, which will seek to expand the program with mentoring, leadership development, occupational training and of course, more youth served. ■

Workforce Solutions Summer Youth Initiatives Across the State

CAPITAL AREA
Summer Youth Employment Program

CENTRAL TEXAS
Creating Futures Summer Program

COASTAL BEND
Ramp It Up!

CONCHO VALLEY
Summer Hire Boot Camp

DEEP EAST TEXAS
Youth Career Fairs

LOWER RIO GRANDE
Youth Career Expo

NORTHEAST TEXAS
L.E.A.P. Youth Expo

NORTH TEXAS
North Texas Summer Youth Work Experience Program

RURAL CAPITAL AREA
Community Youth Development Program

SOUTHEAST TEXAS
“Get Your Job On” Summer Youth Initiative Summer Youth Job Fairs

SOUTH PLAINS
Summer Work Experience

TARRANT COUNTY
YouthWorks

WEST CENTRAL
The Dynamic Futures Program

To learn more about the summer youth initiatives in your area, contact your local workforce solutions office.

PREPARING TEXAS STUDENTS for Tomorrow's Workforce

By Justin Minsker

More than 1,100 students ages 14 to 21 will be attending camps across Texas this summer emphasizing science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) disciplines thanks in part to \$938,104 in scholarship funds administered by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC).

The effort is part of the Governor's Summer Merit Program, which aims to inspire Texas youth to pursue STEM related careers. The camps introduce students to careers in one or more of six industry clusters: advanced technologies and manufacturing, aerospace and defense, biotechnology and life sciences, information and computer technology, petroleum refining and chemical products and energy.

"TWC is pleased to continue our partnership with these outstanding universities and community colleges to provide Texas students with opportunities to explore high-demand science, technology, engineering and math disciplines," said TWC Chairman Andres Alcantar. "The Governor's Summer Merit Program helps expose students to the vast array of careers that require high-demand STEM skills."

The University of Texas at Austin (UT-Austin) hosts five summer camps in engineering and the sciences that strive to increase the number and diversity of students studying STEM fields of computer science, engineering and geology. Camps at UT-Austin include GeoFORCE, a longtime partner of the Summer Merit program.

On March 27, the GeoFORCE program received the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring from the White House Office of Science

and Technology Policy. The award is granted to individuals and organizations that have demonstrated at least five years of excellence in mentoring students, trainees, and/or early career scientists and engineers from groups that are underrepresented in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

Dr. Samuel Moore, Director of Outreach and Diversity for UT's Jackson School of Geosciences' GeoFORCE program, said GeoFORCE began in 2005 at the urging of alumni concerned about the future workforce in the geosciences industry.

"The support from the TWC Summer Merit Camps fund has been instrumental in increasing the diversity and number of students from economically disadvantaged secondary schools in GeoFORCE pursuing STEM degrees," said Moore. "TWC funding makes it possible for 50 students entering the ninth grade to enter the program each summer, with funding from corporate sponsors and foundations supporting students the next three summers. The impact has been that of the 487 students in college who participated in GeoFORCE in high school, more than 60 percent become STEM majors."

Some Summer Merit Camp participants have the opportunity to take field trips that give them access to high-tech



Top: GeoFORCE students on Pima Point at the Grand Canyon as part of the 10th grade Southwest Academy. Bottom: GeoFORCE students on Mt. Hood in Oregon as part of the 11th grade Southwest Academy.

equipment, such as 3D printers and electron telescopes, while others visit science and engineering facilities and have the opportunity to meet and speak with industry professionals. Several of the camps are specifically targeted to encourage young women and minorities to pursue further education and careers in STEM fields.

In 2015, Summer Merit Program scholarships were awarded to 13 grant recipients: The University of Texas at Dallas, The University of Texas at Austin, Texas A&M Engineering Experiment Station, St. Mary's University of San Antonio, Alamo Colleges, Northeast Lakeview College, South Texas College, University of Houston-Downtown, Lee College, Houston Community College, Mountain View College, University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, Texas State University and Lamar University. ■

Coastal Compass receives \$251,000 grant to obtain mobile unit

Coastal Compass on Wheels, a new mobile unit, will be rolling out to help the rural residents of the 12-county Workforce Solutions of the Coastal Bend (Coastal Bend) area.

On May 13, 2015, Charity League of Corpus Christi presented a check for \$251,000 to Citizens for Educational Excellence (CEE) to help extend the reach of Coastal Compass's free services around the area. The grant funds will allow Coastal Compass to purchase a custom-made mobile career center. The mobile unit will be fully equipped with computer stations, Wi-Fi and software for certifications and GED training.

Coastal Bend, in partnership with Coastal Compass, will staff the mobile unit and assist job seekers, employers and individuals with their efforts to find a successful future in the workforce. For more information on the Coastal Compass mobile center, visit coastalcompass.org.



A check for \$251,000 was presented by Charity League, Inc. and accepted by President of CEE and Workforce Solutions Coastal Bend Executive Director Ken Trevino and Executive Director of CEE, E2E and Coastal Compass Dr. Janet Cunningham.

Photo courtesy of Corpus Christi Times

Inaugural Awards for Adult Literacy, Youth Career Awareness to be presented at 2015 Conference

During the annual Texas Workforce Conference two new awards will be presented, the Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) Incentive and the Career Awareness/Youth Inspiration awards.

The AEL award is supported with AEL State Leadership funds and will recognize first and second place winners in three categories based on provider nominations: the Employer Partnerships, College Integration and Local Workforce Development Board Integration. For the 2015 AEL Incentive awards, the Commission has approved monetary prizes in the amounts of \$50,000 for first place and \$35,000 for second place in each category.

The Career Awareness/Youth Inspiration Award is supported with WIA Youth funds and will recognize three Workforce Solutions Board initiatives focused on career awareness and exploration for young adults. Recipients of this award will receive \$100,000 per award.

Winners will be recognized at an awards ceremony in Dallas during the 2015 Texas Workforce Conference on Nov. 18-20.

Local Collaborations Target High-Demand Job Training

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas (Southeast Texas) launched the first high-demand job training program in Port Arthur as part of the Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) \$1 million statewide effort to support collaborations between Workforce Solutions partners and local economic development entities. The partnerships for this effort are meant to be area specific to create job-training and improve skill sets in high-demand occupations in the community.

Southeast Texas joined the Port Arthur Economic Development Corp. (PAEDC) and Team Fabricators to address the demand for qualified welders in Port Arthur. The \$75,000 grant awarded by TWC will provide training for 24 welders over a 12-month period. During the launch of the program, TWC Chairman Andres Alcantar joined Southeast Texas, the PAEDC, Team Fabricators and local dignitaries for a tour of the training facility and a welding demonstration.

Workforce Solutions South Plains was also awarded a TWC High Demand Job Training grant for \$74,000 to facilitate occupational training during the 2015-16 school year at six local independent school districts.

South Plains, the Lubbock Economic Development Alliance and the independent school districts teamed up to train approximately 190 seniors in high-demand occupations including welding, nursing assistant, machinist and general maintenance, and repair technician.

For more information on the High Demand Job Training Program go to texasworkforce.org/high-demand-job-training-program.



High Demand Job Training

On May 7, TWC Chairman Andres Alcantar (second from left) poses with trainees of the High Demand Job Training program at Team Fabricators in Port Arthur. Representatives from Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas, the Port Arthur Economic Development Corp. and local dignitaries attended a grant announcement at Team Fabricators and received a tour of the training facility and a welding demonstration.

Photo courtesy of Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas

Texas Star Award Winner

The Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) Star Award for the second-quarter of 2015 was presented to Director of Integrated Services and Career Schools and Colleges Stephen Rye. TWC's Star Award program recognizes employees who perform above and beyond at promoting agency systems and solutions and provide outstanding customer service and support.

Rye oversees a number of programs at TWC, including those that provide policy and operational information to Workforce Solutions partners, directors, agency staff and career schools. He continually delivers exceptional customer service with his ongoing support to public, state and federal entities by representing the agency in a professional manner, promoting a team approach and demonstrating substantial workforce and career school knowledge. His positive attitude carries over into his personal contributions to the community through volunteerism.



Photo by TWC Communications

Individual Winner –

Director of ISA and Career Schools and Colleges Stephen Rye is flanked by Chairman Andres Alcanter (left) and Commissioner Representing Labor Ronny Congleton (right).

A promotional poster for the "Hiring Red, White & You! Statewide Hiring Fair". The background features a close-up of a military uniform with an American flag patch. The text reads: "Hiring Red, White & You!™ Statewide Hiring Fair". Below this, it says "Save the Date November 12, 2015". A text box contains the following information: "Join the Texas Workforce Commission in partnership with the Texas Medical Center as they present the fourth annual Hiring Red, White & You! Statewide Hiring Fair to connect veterans, service members and their spouses to Texas employers. Employers may participate at no cost." The website "www.texasworkforce.org/hrwy" is listed. At the bottom, there are logos for the Texas Workforce Commission, Texas Workforce Solutions, Texas Veterans Commission, and TMC Texas Medical Center.

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WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

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The Texas Workforce Commission, in partnership with 28 local workforce development boards, forms Texas Workforce Solutions.

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