NEW RIVER COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE DEDICATES EDUCATION AND TRAINING CENTER

[Beckley, W. Va.] New River Community and Technical College dedicated a new Education and Training Center on Friday, Oct. 29. The event attracted hundreds government, education, business and industry leaders from across West Virginia.
“The addition of our new Education and Training Center will significantly change the economic landscape of southern West Virginia,” says New River President Ted D. Spring. “New River is now poised to become a giant in workforce education.”

The 93,000-square-foot building was built seven years ago as a manufacturing facility for modular homes. Located in Ghent, W. Va., the center is set on 23 surrounding buildable acres on the border of Raleigh and Mercer Counties in the heart of New River’s nine-county service area with easy access to Interstate 77.

“Community and technical colleges are truly West Virginia’s promise for the future,” Spring stated during his comments at the ribbon-cutting.

According to Spring, participation at the ceremony was a clear message that others throughout the region and the state understand the potential of this facility to become an economic development engine.

He explains that New River has created a unique model to partner with regional and statewide businesses to design workshops, courses and programs finely tuned to meet specific employer needs.

“The college has developed an entrepreneurial spirit to help sustain and improve services to businesses and industries in the region,” Spring says. “Partnerships and collaboration improve sustainability of programs and services. This is a model that everyone gets.”

The New River Education and Training Center will focus its training programs on 12 key industry segments, according to William Loope, vice president for workforce education and institutional advancement. They are mining and energy, weatherization, hospitality and leisure, green buildings systems, manufacturing, line service mechanic, HVAC, CDL, heavy equipment operator, welding and pipe welding, horticulture/landscaping, automotive and diesel technology and GIS-surveying.
Loope understands the strong connection between workforce training and the role played by community colleges in West Virginia. The presence of a new training center responsive to workforce needs in our region will help support southeastern West Virginia as a destination for new business and, more importantly, strengthen our services to long-standing business partners throughout our region, he says.

New River has been leasing the building for several months and now has approval from the West Virginia Community and Technical Education Council to purchase it with a $3.3 million grant from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act with the assistance of West Virginia Governor Joe Manchin. U.S. Congressman Rahall (D-W.Va.) is working to secure an additional $600,000 in federal funds for the project.

Rahall, an early proponent of the center, was the keynote speaker at the dedication ceremony. He spoke of the importance of the weatherization and green building training that is a centerpiece of the new facility.

"Here, New River will be training workers who will be employed statewide in understanding that building is more than just about hammers and nails," he said. "Building energy efficient homes and offices involves science, art and technical expertise that traditionally had been passed down from generation to generation. Today we bring the best of the best to the table to blend all three and produce a highly skilled workforce using advanced technologies."

Also singing the praises of the new facility were State Senators Mike Green and Richard Browning, both of whom were instrumental behind the scenes in helping secure funding for the building. Tom Hughes, president and CEO of HSC Industrial, spoke of the need for the kind of technical training that can now be offered by New River to assist companies like his in finding highly skilled employees.

Following the ceremony, guests got a sneak preview of an Advanced Energy and Technology Expo sponsored by the college on Oct. 30. The expo featured a broad spectrum of...
vendors in energy and high technology fields. The timing of the expo coincided with the observance of Weatherization Day, which Governor Manchin proclaimed for Oct. 30.

“New River is committed to the continuation of training the coal workers of West Virginia as well as building skills in the auxiliary energy fields such as oil, gas, wind, geothermal and photovoltaic technologies. In addition to these initiatives, we are also contracted by the WV Division of Energy to facilitate regional meetings to encourage the adoption and enforcement of energy codes in local jurisdictions,” Loope says. “The expo was our opportunity to showcase our training programs which will lead successful participants into high paying jobs.”

New River Community and Technical College is a multi-campus institution with administrative headquarters in Beckley. The college serves a nine-county region encompassing Fayette, Greenbrier, Mercer, Monroe, Nicholas, Pocahontas, Raleigh, Summers and Webster Counties in southeastern West Virginia from four campuses: Beckley, Greenbrier Valley (Lewisburg), Mercer County (Princeton) and Nicholas County (Summersville).

For more information about New River’s advanced energy performance training and other workforce training opportunities, call (304) 929-6735.

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