

Letters and Commentary

Workforce development key in GCAC's 5-year Action Plan

The following is the fifth in a series about the Greater Crisfield Action Coalitions and the significance of its action plan. This covers the section on Workforce Development.

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The Five-Year Action Plan for Cris-

field contains five components, one of which is "Workforce Development." This is about helping people master the knowledge, skills and behaviors necessary to qualify for available jobs. It is different than education, which focuses primarily on knowledge and may or may not provide any direct path to employment.

For workforce development to be successful, it must meet the needs of

the employer and the employee.

Workforce development is most successful when it is approached as a collaborative effort of private industry, government, and educational organizations. Government funds much of the workforce development, and follows actions plans. Locally, GCAC's plan dealt with training for workers in the hospitality industry.

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GCAC created the Crisfield Hospitality Industry Partnership under the leadership of Kathy Berezoski of Watermen's Inn with the assistance of Mary Nelson of Water's Edge Café. The National Restaurant Association flew in a Vice-President from Chicago, Wor-Wic identified Chef Bonnie Aronson as our instructor, and planning began, leading to the specialized White Boot Hospitality™ (WBH) training program offered earlier this year at the Crisfield Elks. Mayor Lawson taught a portion of the WBH class to provide history to students on the Crisfield area.

In addition, Somerset County independently used superstorm Sandy recovery funds to offer additional hospitality training programs that were part of the GCAC plan, and Wor-Wic had hospitality workshops scheduled in Ocean City. With GCAC's assistance, Crisfield residents participated in all of these.

Planning for expanded training programs for 2017 for both Crisfield

job seekers and existing workers has already begun with Wor-Wic and the state. As more workers get training, we know that there are jobs available in the Hospitality Industry in Ocean City. Part of the plan is to develop a transportation infrastructure, possibly in cooperation with Shore Transit, to move Crisfield workers to jobs in Ocean City and bring day-tourists to Crisfield.

As more jobs develop in Crisfield, workers will be able to find jobs closer to home. Potential transportation partners were identified and planning was begun on this idea in 2016, and we hope to make it a reality for the 2017 tourist season.

In setting up successful workforce development programs, the greatest impact for the persons receiving the training is that their credentials are stackable, meaning they can get to

work more quickly and can advance to higher paying jobs over time, and latticed, meaning workers can move from one industry to another as situations change. These concepts are part of the GCAC Workforce Development Plan.

GCAC started with Hospitality because we are focusing on creating a tourist-driven economy. In February 2016, GCAC published the full plan that includes creating industry partnerships in half a dozen other industries as well that are also important to Crisfield's economy and repeating this model for workforce development in each area. The plan includes tactics to address the special workforce development issues of youth, adults, ex-offenders, those with history of drug abuse, and veterans.

Discussions have also begun with Sherwin-Williams about helping to

prepare local residents with the special skills required of their manufacturing jobs. Economic development professionals know that one of the most important factors for businesses considering relocation or opening operations in an area is whether there is a workforce development infrastructure in place that can fill the pipeline with appropriately skilled workers for their operations. GCAC's workforce development plan is aimed at supporting the hospitality industry as well as other industries.

For more details on the GCAC plan, go to www.GreaterCrisfield-MD.com/Plan and download Action Plan - Part Two. There also is a 250 page book on the topic, written and edited by GCAC's Director of Workforce Development Keith Campbell, at www.packworld.com/workforce. This book has been downloaded in every state of the United States and over 80 foreign countries by thousands of organizations who wish to understand the same workforce development strategies that are being used right here in the greater Crisfield area.



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