



Students in the Crowne Plaza-Tysons Corner Destination Workforce® class prepare for the first day's lessons (photo courtesy of Ruba Afzal and LCNV)

Destination Workforce®: Working Towards Literacy

by CHRISTOPHER GRIFFITHS

Nationwide, 24% of the educated immigrant and refugee workforce is underemployed or unemployed¹, while over half of all immigrants in Fairfax County have limited English proficiency². LCNV's Destination Workforce® is a response to these demographic and workforce demands. Developed as a fast-track language program for on-the-job or job readiness English language learning, each Destination Workforce® course is created in partnership with a local business or community organization. The class is customized to the specific needs of the partner, covering industry- or job-specific vocabulary as well as U.S. work culture and professional etiquette. In the last few months, LCNV launched two unique Destination Workforce® programs in collaboration with different

industry partners. Each is oriented towards helping individuals advance in their careers and job prospects.

The City of Alexandria's Workforce Development Center VIEW Program sought LCNV's expertise with beginning level English language and literacy learners to develop an intensive course to help newly arrived refugees – unable to read or write in their native languages and lacking any English proficiency – gain basic English literacy. As recipients of TANF funding, these clients are expected to assimilate and begin working within 90 days. With this 90-day deadline in mind, LCNV developed its most intensive beginning level Destination Workforce® program to date. The four-week pilot class met four times a week for four hours at a time in Alexandria and

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Career Pathways

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PIVA lite moves at a less intense pace; it may take students an entire year to get their GED®, CRC, and digital literacy credentials, along with some type of certification.

Thinking about the academic levels we were seeing among interested students also led us to create what we call our “intro level” classes. So, this spring, we held an “Into to Health Care” class; it was only eight weeks but it shook the trees a little bit. We brought in students who might be just at the ABE intermediate high level with the goals of exposing them to health care occupations and vocabulary and working to try to get two GED® subject tests passed. For the career exploration piece, the class included project-based learning throughout the session leading up to final presentations by students— similar to but not as demanding as the PIVA capstone project. We hope that the intro class will be a feeder for the CNA cohort that we’re hoping to start in the fall.

What have been some of the benefits of colocation, holding classes in space provided by Reynolds?

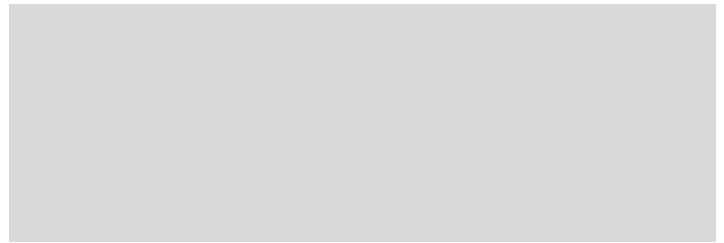
The access to resources, the technology, and just the setting of being on a college campus are real motivators for the students. The Middle College support staff are an incredible resource; Miss Jackie Epps is like an air traffic controller – she knows every student in every class and really builds supportive relationships.

There are also opportunities that come because you’re braiding your funding; Mary Jo has her own grants, which can often cover things my grants can’t pay for. If we do a lunch and learn, she can order pizza for everybody.

How did you build relationships with the regional community colleges?

It has been a major benefit to me that my one collaborative partnership with Middle College at Reynolds has extended into opportunities to meet other stakeholders and supporters. Now the region has closer ties with the presidents

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of both our local community colleges – Dr. Rhodes and Dr. Raspiller – because they’re seeing what we’re doing with Middle College and PluggedInVA and are interested in seeing this model replicated in other locations.

In Goochland and Powhatan, our GED® classes were historically held at the high schools at night. While it was generous of the schools to offer that space, enrollment has not been great. I’m anticipating a positive change this year, as we will be able to hold a night class on Reynolds’ Goochland campus. Now, Region 15 adult education will be on the Reynolds downtown and Goochland campuses and John Tyler’s Chester campus. Before PluggedIn, I could not have called up and expected to get a positive response to a request for space, but now that the colleges know what we can offer, we’re able to make more connections.

I’m also over the moon about the fact that Elizabeth Creamer will be leading the Community College Workforce Alliance, a partnership between John Tyler and Reynolds that pools their workforce resources to support the entire footprint of Tyler and Reynolds, including the capital area as well as the Region 10 and the Crater area.

What’s next for PluggedIn for the region, and how do you see your partnerships developing in the future?

What’s next is that we’re going to continue to focus on health care, taking into account our lessons learned and building them into the model. We also plan to expand into logistics (not necessarily using PluggedIn funds but following the PIVA model); we’re looking into NCCER core certification for the construction trades, and we’re hoping to do something with

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competitors. This data got attention, and there are a number of direct outgrowths – including the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) in July of 2014, with specific PIAAC data points referenced, as a bipartisan, bicameral law at a time when that was exceedingly rare.

What do you hope to accomplish at the state level?

Moving from the federal level to the state level is a chance to connect policy to practice, to really see how to make change happen for communities and families. I recognize that the beautiful Commonwealth of Virginia is extremely varied in its economy and communities and that solutions need to be localized to be workable. I'm very interested in how we make that happen, working with regional program managers, local providers, and workforce development partners to customize programming and craft effective local education and training options that enhance family self-sufficiency.

As my background shows, I'm also very interested in technology-enabled solutions for teaching and learning. I'm eager to think with providers about how distance education and technology-supported supplemental learning can help address challenges of

transportation, scheduling, acceleration, differentiation, and more for our rural and our metro learners.

I know that Virginia adult educators have been engaged in the work to adopt and implement standards-based instruction, and I applaud all the work that has gone into this effort and all that is planned. I know that many programs and instructors are engaging in professional learning communities to support this work, and I'm looking forward to contributing to these efforts, including as the English Language Proficiency Standards are folded into the effort.

What would you like the public to know about adult education and literacy?

I know that through WIOA implementation, adult education is a key player in the Combined State Plan goals of increasing credentials and engaging more adults in further education and training. I would like the wider public, including potential learners, to also recognize that increasing skills and educational attainment and credentials is absolutely critical to youth and adults' economic advancement and, ultimately, healthy families and communities. ::

For program managers: Hire staff that's flexible. PluggedInVA really is a new model, and when you're starting something new, you don't get it right the first time.

Trying to be flexible and making adjustments as you go along are crucial. We realized we needed to create more options for lower-skilled students who were interested in PIVA and plant seeds for future cohorts. That's why we started the intro level and PIVA lite classes. When we had students who completed their capstone and passed the CNA exam but hadn't passed all four GED® subtests, we

started a summer GED® completion class. It can be frustrating for staff when we make changes, but we're responding to needs as they come up. Maybe in three years we'll have figured it out.

My biggest takeaway is the success of the students. There's a beautiful transformation that happens with PluggedInVA, where students come in and are not sure of themselves but are given opportunities to build skills and have success along the way, and they gain confidence in themselves. ::

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Key Definitions from WIOA Legislation and Regulations

Integrated Education and Training (IET)

"... a service approach that provides adult education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster for the purpose of educational and career advancement" (34 CFR §463.35)

Adult Education and Literacy

"... programs, activities, and services that include: (a) adult education, (b) literacy, (c) workplace adult education and literacy activities, (d) family literacy activities, (e) English language acquisition activities, (f) integrated English literacy and civics education, (g) workforce preparation activities, or (h) integrated education and training" (34 CFR §463.30)

Workforce Preparation

"Activities, programs, or services designed to help an individual acquire a combination of basic academic skills, critical thinking skills, digital literacy skills, and self-management skills, including competencies in: (a) utilizing resources; (b) using information; (c) working with others; (d) understanding systems; (e) skills necessary for successful transition into and completion of postsecondary education or training, or employment; and (f) other employability skills ..." (34 CFR §463.34)

Workforce Training

"may include (i) occupational skill training...; (ii) on-the-job training; (iii) incumbentworker training...; (iv) programs that combine workplace training with related instruction...; (v) training programs operated by the private sector; (vi) skill upgrading and retraining; (vii) entrepreneurial training; (viii) transitional jobs...; (ix) job readiness training provided in combination with services...(i) through (viii); (x) adult education and literacy activities, including activities of English language acquisition and integrated education and training programs, provided concurrently or in combination with services described in any of clauses (i) through (vii); and (xi) customized training conducted with a commitment by an employer or group of employers to employ an individual upon successful completion of the training" (WIOA Section 134(c) (3) (D), P.L. 113-128)

Calendar

September

1

VAACE Proposals Due
<https://vaace.org>

25 - November 19

VALRC Online Courses
Fall Term
www.valrc.org

27 - 30

ProLiteracy Conference
Minneapolis, MN
www.proliteracy.org

October

20 - 21

VATESOL Conference
New Kent, VA
vatesol.cloverpad.org

20 - 22

VATE Conference
Fredericksburg, VA
www.vate.org

25 - 26

COABE 2017 Virtual
Conference
www.coabe.org

31 - November 3

AAACE Conference
Memphis, TN
www.aace.org

November

1 - 2

VAACE Conference
Fredericksburg, VA
<https://vaace.org>

12 - 15

IET Design Institute and
Effective Transitions in
Adult Education
Conference
Providence, RI
www.collegetransition.org

16 - 19

NCTE Annual
Convention
St. Louis, MO
convention.ncte.org

Meet Heidi Silver-Pacuilla, Virginia's New Adult Education Coordinator



Effective May 10, 2017, Heidi Silver-Pacuilla, Ph.D., was employed by the Virginia Department of Education to fill a new position titled Adult Education Coordinator in the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education. Recently, Dr. Silver-Pacuilla responded to four questions pertaining to her new work in adult education.

How did you get started in adult education?

I started teaching English to adults when I was in Israel (kibbutz) – that was a long time ago! I've always been drawn to adult education: I like to be part of others' empowerment and growth, to be in a facilitator role, and to watch adults learn and hear them express their reflections on that process.

It was easy to get started in adult education and literacy; it was harder to stay in it and make it a career. I got a doctorate in adult literacy and learning disabilities when the University of Arizona didn't really have a program on adult learning in the College of Education. I convinced my professors to let me put one together that combined special education, critical literacies, women's studies, disability studies, and teacher development. I did my dissertation research, supported in part with a grant from ProLiteracy's Women in Literacy program, as a year-long series of focus groups with women literacy learners with disabilities of all types at Pima County Adult Education in Tucson, AZ. It was fascinating and I learned so much from the stories they shared and the thinking we did together. Because the women asked during those sessions, "isn't there something out there that could help me?", I searched for an opportunity to learn more. I received a Mary Switzer Fellowship from the U.S. Department of Education to study how assistive technologies could be introduced into adult education programming to support students with disabilities. Both sets of research were conducted as participatory action research, a method in which the participants help create, collect, interpret, and present the data and findings. It was an excellent fit for adult education and solidified my commitment to involving students in all aspects of programming and community engagement.

Where has your career taken you?

There haven't been many working years in my life when I wasn't working in adult education in some way: tutor, classroom instructor, VISTA volunteer, disability specialist, professional developer, advisory board member, researcher, and federal staff.

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2017-2018 expands those incentives to a wider group of adults. Horseshoe staff have also made adjustments on the high school coaching side, with coaches giving more attention to students after graduation to help prevent “summer melt” (when students who have been accepted to college in the spring “melt away” during the summer – perhaps due to lack of confidence, problems completing college or financial aid paperwork, or reluctance to leave a summer job — and never show up for college classes in the fall). The Rural Virginia Horseshoe is a match program, with the community colleges’ educational foundation raising funds that are matched 50-50 by participating colleges. It is fully funded through the end of the pilot; while Lane notes that “there is no guarantee as there is not with anything involving grants,” the hope is that signs of success will lead participating colleges to continue to invest in the career coach and adult incentives strategies and inspire the other rural Virginia colleges to adopt them as well. For more on the history and potential of the horseshoe project, including an eight-minute video that tells the story of the initiative, visit <http://www.vccs.edu/giving/rural-horseshoe-initiative>.

Education and Training Incentives: Supporting Adult Learners

For adult educators and their current or former students, the initiative’s “recovery strategy,” with its \$1000 incentives for adults, offers the biggest opportunities. These funds were originally conceived of as “GED® incentives,” but were not widely used, in large part because the GED® test changed just as the horseshoe initiative was rolling out in 2014, becoming more difficult, more expensive, and less accessible. While to date fewer students are earning their GED® credential annually than they were prior to January 2014, there are 350,000 adults, 25 or older, in rural Virginia who have a high school diploma but nothing more. An adult in rural Virginia with a high school diploma or credential but no further education or

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training is likely to be in the same economic situation as someone without a high school diploma. To increase opportunities for adult learners, the Rural Virginia Horseshoe Initiative has renamed the \$1000 incentives “Education and Training Incentives” and expanded their use. In addition to adult GED® recipients, now adults who are 25 or older who have a high school diploma but are considered low skill or low wage can qualify for these incentives. (An adult can demonstrate that they are low skill in one of three ways – with a TABE score of 12.8 or lower, an ACCUPLACER score 111 or lower, or by applying to their local community college and being placed in developmental courses. The initiative uses the federal definition for low wage, 200% of the poverty limit.)

Lane emphasized that adults without a high school credential remain an important target audience for the horseshoe initiative. “We can’t affect this older population,” she said, “without adult ed’s partnership and their trust and their understanding that we want to help [adult ed] students. These incentives are specifically written to help adult education students take that next step.” Programs may find the initiative’s “fast facts” sheet on incentives to be a helpful resource (www.tinyurl.com/rvhifacts); there is also a customizable recruitment flyer featuring information about incentives and a success story (www.tinyurl.com/rvhiflyer). Lane recommends adult education programs continue building relationships with their local community colleges, recognizing how the horseshoe initiative can help support both partners in achieving WIOA outcomes. She encourages program staff who have questions about the initiative or working with their community college partners, or who want to find out more about how they can help promote the Education and Training Incentives for adult students to contact her at clane@vccs.edu or (804) 819-1695. ∴

Caroline Lane is Project Director of the Rural Virginia Horseshoe Initiative.



PLUGGED IN VA COMES TO REGION 15

Program Manager Rachel Ambrose

Can you start by talking a little bit about how the pieces came together last year to begin a PluggedInVA (PIVA) program?

When I started here as regional program manager, I made the rounds to introduce myself to different partners. I knew that Mary Jo Washko had a great reputation with her Middle College program, so she was one of the first people I reached out to. We talked about the opportunity to do something on the downtown Reynolds campus, and that led to the two of us collaborating on writing our first PIVA grant for a GED® to CNA program last summer.

We each brought strengths to the partnership: people know about Middle College in this area, and I had the experience of knowing that the PIVA model works from my previous experience running and supporting PIVA programs in Region 21.

How did you approach marketing and recruitment?

Initially, for that first cohort, grant notification came later than we had anticipated and so we really only had a three-week span in which to recruit. We printed postcards and left them everywhere, including on the GRTC buses. Mary Jo was great boots on the ground, going to the bus stops around the MCV area asking folks if they or someone they knew would be interested in this type of opportunity. She'd say, "You know, if it's not for you, could you just leave this on the bus?" And we actually did get a couple of students who said, "Oh, I saw this postcard on the bus." We sent an announcement over a regional distribution list; we contacted our One-Stop; we hoped to encourage word of

mouth. We also had huge posters on the downtown Reynolds campus.

And our response was pretty amazing: over 200 people were interested in the program and took the TABE. From that group, we did 60 interviews over the course of two days, and we ended up selecting 20 learners for that first cohort. Out of that cohort, 14 completed the program with at least one credential. Nine passed the CNA exam; ten participated in clinicals held at either the Autumn Care Facility in Mechanicsville or The Virginia Home in Richmond. (Changes to the CNA test and scheduling with Pearson VUE meant we had to readjust our plans and the assessment timeframe. This was another benefit of our partnership – my funds ran out, but Mary Jo was able to hire a tutor who held reviews for students the week before testing.) Two students already had a GED® certificate when they began PIVA, five more earned their GED® credentials during the program, seven students passed three of the four GED® subjects test, and two students passed two of four subtests.

After our initial recruitment effort, we realized that we had great interest but that the majority of respondents were not quite at the academic level to be successful in a PluggedInVA Careers cohort. In hindsight, I may have cast the net a little too wide, because we weren't able to get all 20 students through to earning their GED® credentials. So, if we determined by January that some students really weren't able to meet the demands and the academic rigor of the PIVA class, we moved them into our "PIVA lite" class, where they were able to continue working on their GED® preparation but did not continue on the credit side of the community college for the CNA certification.

Sustaining PluggedInVA Programs in Region 2

by LINDA ALLEN

Between February 2009 and May 2017, Southwest Regional Adult Education (SRAE) and its partners implemented thirty-nine PluggedInVA (PIVA) cohorts in Region 2 serving 422 participants. Through this experience we learned that the essential components for the successful sustainability of the PIVA program include following the PIVA model, providing comprehensive professional development, embracing partnerships and collaboration, and securing funding.

Follow the model.

PluggedInVA is a career pathways bridge program that prepares adult learners with the knowledge, skills, and credentials and certifications they need to succeed in postsecondary education, training, and high demand, high wage careers in the 21st century. The key elements include:

- industry-specific contextualized curriculum,
- co-enrollment at a postsecondary institution,
- industry-recognized credentials or certifications,
- career coaching,
- an active business partner,
- a capstone project, and
- the cohort model.

Provide comprehensive professional development.

Continuous, high quality professional development is important to ensure effective implementation. Regular meetings with all stakeholders help to ensure that we continue to build relationships and trust, develop a common vocabulary, and learn the same content and best practices. In each of the four counties in Region 2, SRAE has a PIVA leadership team comprised of specialized PIVA instructors. The technical instructor(s) provided by a partner joins the team to implement the industry-focused cohort.

Embrace partnerships and collaboration.

Partnerships make PIVA work! Community and business partnerships enhance the

delivery of the PIVA model and help fill in the resource and service gaps based on the needs of the cohort. Clear expectations must be set regarding the roles and responsibilities for the partners. Our core partners are local community colleges and career and technical centers, local businesses, and the Workforce Development Board. SRAE's PIVA coordinator helps maintain partnerships with community agencies and facilitates effective communication and collaboration.

Secure funding.

Sustainability for PIVA focuses on both partnerships and dedicated funding. Sustained funding for PIVA in Region 2 has been secured from a variety of sources that leverage a combination of federal, state, and local dollars. An example is our partnerships with a local community college and the Workforce Development Board on two, three-year Department of Labor grants that included PIVA as the entry-level training component. Working under these grants, SRAE and partners created long-term, detailed plans for PIVA sustainability.

Although we have been very successful in the implementation of PIVA programs in Region 2, developing the cohorts in our rural area is not without its challenges. For us, the major decline in the coal industry has negatively impacted the region, leaving service and retail industries and health care accounting for most of the jobs in the area. We are also experiencing population loss, high poverty levels, and an unemployment rate ranging from 6.1% to 9.9%. The workplace is fundamentally being transformed as economic developers explore tourism, advanced manufacturing, and cybersecurity as industries to boost the economy. As we move forward, we are confident that PluggedInVA will continue to have a significant role as the region begins to retrain, retool, and re-engineer. .:

Linda Allen is regional program manager of Southwest Regional Adult Education.

Aligning Goals and Expectations for Instruction: A CCRS/GED®/VPT Crosswalk

by JEFFREY ELMORE

As integration of the College and Career Readiness Standards progresses and instruction becomes designed around these standards, I'm sure many instructors are asking how the CCRS align with students' more specific goals such as earning a GED® credential or doing well on the community college system's Virginia Placement Test (VPT). With that in mind, VALRC has been developing crosswalks of these three items. VALRC would like to introduce our first math crosswalk: CCRS Mathematics Major Work of the Level, GED® Mathematical Reasoning High Impact Indicators, and content in the Virginia Placement Test for Mathematics. The purpose of this crosswalk is to inform instructors and programs about how elements of the GED® High Impact Indicators and VPT align by level and content with the structure of the CCRS Major Work of the Level. We hope that you will use this tool to recognize content-based congruities and disparities among the CCRS, GED® test, and VPT in order for more accurate planning according to your students' specific needs and goals.

Since the CCRS are the foundation for adult education instruction in Virginia, they are also the foundation for this crosswalk. The CCRS levels and content are presented as they appear in the [Major Work of the Level document](#). Because of this, the CCRS standards listed here do not include the parenthetical citations (such as 6.NS.7d). These citations will appear in the next crosswalk we will introduce: a larger crosswalk containing all of the College and Career Readiness Standards for Mathematics, all of the GED® Mathematical Reasoning Assessment Targets, and all of the content assessed by the Virginia Placement Test for Mathematics.

The GED® High Impact Indicators are listed as they correspond to items in the CCRS Major Work of the Level (MWOTL). Because the High Impact Indicators are representative of common student deficiencies that must

be overcome in order to pass the GED® test, they are primarily composed of content at the C and D levels. Even though there are no GED® High Impact Indicators at Level A and few at level B, these foundational skills are represented within content at the higher levels. VPT math content was listed in the crosswalk as it corresponded to the CCRS content, taking the same approach used with the GED® High Impact Indicators. It must be noted that the VPT content does not differentiate major work or high impact items from subordinating content. Content from the VPT with no direct match to the CCRS MWOTL has been evaluated and aligned to the most appropriate CCRS level and subject domain (e.g., "writing a whole number in words" has been aligned to CCRS Level A). Colors used in the MWOTL document to indicate subject domains (Geometry, Algebra, Numbers and Number Sense, and Statistics and Probability) have been maintained but have not been applied to the GED® High Impact Areas or the VPT content.

You can access the crosswalk here: <http://tinyurl.com/mwotlcrosswalk> .:

Jeffrey Elmore is Academic Programming Specialist at the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center.

Eastern Shore Benefits as part of Rural Horseshoe

by SHARON RENNER

Region 22's College and Career Readiness Program is located on the campus of Eastern Shore Community College (ESCC), the fiscal agent for the region's grants. This partnership is beneficial to the adult education students: the Rural Virginia Horseshoe Initiative is a good example.

First generation college students overcome many challenges. Funding for post-secondary education is one of those major challenges. Not only are these students concerned with the cost of tuition and books, but because they are adults with families, the costs of childcare, transportation, and everyday living expenses are also realistic concerns. Since its conception, the Rural Virginia Horseshoe Initiative (RVHI) has helped students address those concerns.

At the time of its implementation, the funding from the RVHI was given to GED® graduates who had received their diplomas within the last five years. Our

**For adults with families ...
the funding opened the door
to think beyond
their high school education.**

GED® instructors passed this information on to their students and often used it as one of the incentives to complete the process of attaining high school equivalency. Due to the requirement of securing matching funds for this initiative, our Eastern Shore Community College Foundation's Board has graciously taken on the fiscal management of the RVHI funding. When GED® students graduate, they are given an application for this grant. Once completed, the form is reviewed by our Adult Education Program Manager with the Associate VP of Instructional Advancement who manages

the funds from the Foundation. Together, they ensure eligibility requirements for the college and RVHI are met. At the beginning of each semester, the VP and Program Manager review the applicants and ensure they are enrolled in classes at the college. The VP contacts each student to determine their individual needs as related to use of RVHI funds.

The Eastern Shore Community College granted three GED® graduates \$1,000 each in 2015-2016. Two of those students used their funding to help pay for their CDL class. The other student used her grant to pay for childcare while she attended the CNA program. The childcare payment went directly to the childcare provider. The student is currently furthering her career and is enrolled in the medical assistant program at our college. This student stated that if she had not received this funding, she would have given up. The funding allowed her to achieve her dream and to do so without the extra burden of financial overload.

In 2016-2017, the Eastern Shore Community College awarded ten GED® graduates \$1,000 each. All of these students applied their funding towards tuition. Five took the CDL class, one is in the CNA program, one in Business Administration and Management, one in HVAC, and the other three in general studies. Again, the general consensus of these students is that the funding opened the door to think beyond their high school education. It motivated them and encouraged them to attempt what at one time seemed unapproachable and unthinkable – career paths that can be achieved through our community college. .:

Sharon Renner is adult education regional specialist in Region 22.

The Rural Virginia Horseshoe Initiative

by CAROLINE LANE as interviewed by HILLARY MAJOR

Caroline Lane, Project Director for the Rural Virginia Horseshoe Initiative, spoke with *Progress* to share the history of the project and what's new for program year 2017-2018.

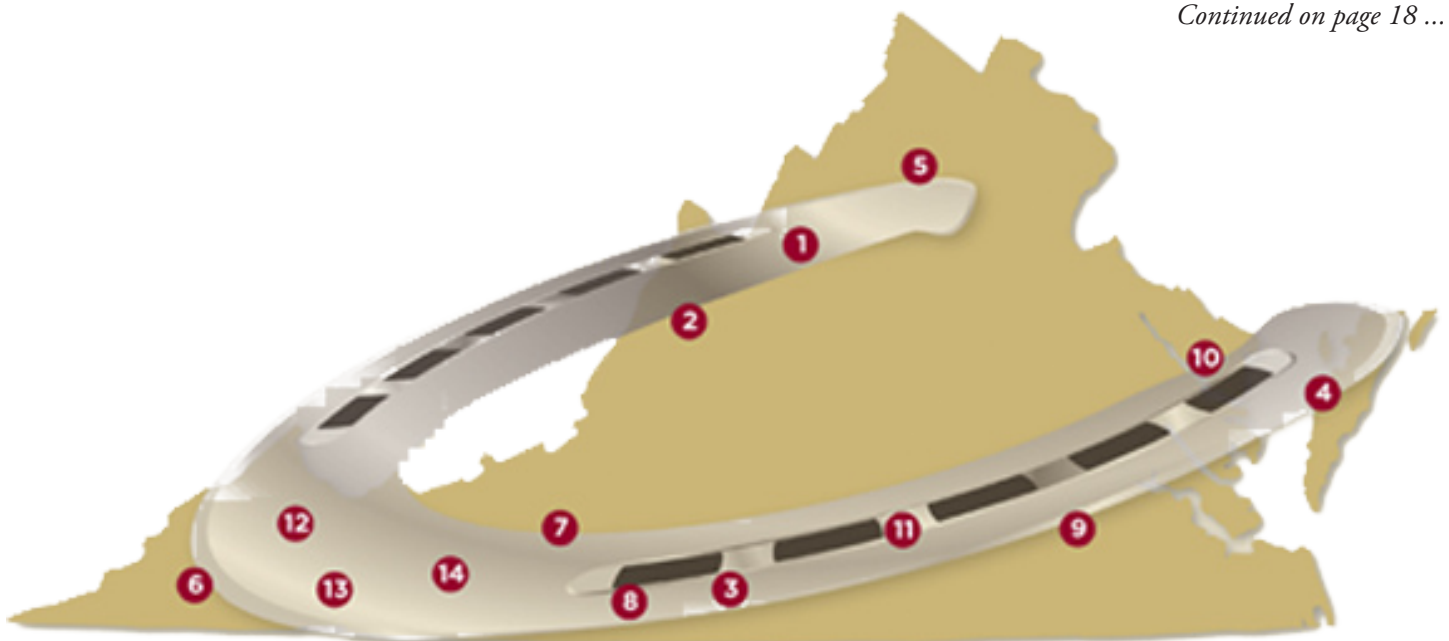
About the Horseshoe Initiative

The Rural Virginia Horseshoe Initiative is four years old; it was started out of concern about the disparity in educational attainment rates between rural parts of Virginia, the "horseshoe," and the "crescent" parts of Virginia. The crescent covers densely populated parts of Virginia, including Northern Virginia, Richmond, and the Hampton Roads area. The horseshoe runs from the Eastern Shore down through Southside Virginia, through Southwest Virginia, and up the Shenandoah Valley, forming a rough horseshoe shape.

If the crescent were its own state, it would place 2nd in the country in terms of

educational attainment rate. If the horseshoe region were its own state, it would be tied with Arkansas for 50th place. That disparity gained attention, and the community college system decided to address the problem by recreating a program that was first implemented in Patrick County under the leadership of former Governor Baliles and the Patrick County Education Foundation. The initiative includes two strategies: One is full-time high school career coaches; those are community college employees who are based in high schools and work with students to create college and career plans. They also assist students in filling out scholarship applications and help them to envision themselves as college material, often reaching out to involve their parents. They often work with students who, due to their average academics, might not otherwise get much individualized attention from school counselors. The coaches' goal is not necessarily to recruit students to the

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This visual of Virginia's rural horseshoe region marks the fourteen community colleges that are located in the footprint of the horseshoe. Visit www.vccs.edu/giving/rural-horseshoe-initiative for the list of colleges or for more information.

The Revolution in Virginia's Community-based Literacy Organizations: Transforming Instruction to Teach Workforce Skills to the Underserved

by VICTOIRE GERKENS SANBORN

Introduction

Adult learners who receive literacy services at Virginia's community-based literacy organizations (CBLOs) enter the first rung of the career pathways ladder. In recent years, CBLOs funded by Integrated English Language and Civics Education (IELCE) and Virginia Literacy Foundation (VLF) grants have come up with innovative ways to provide integrated, contextualized instruction to low literate students who seek to improve their job skills, earn industry credentials, enter apprenticeship training, or transition into high school equivalency or adult education programs.

In Williamsburg, Literacy for Life actively partners with local businesses who share their curriculum guidelines and textbooks, visit the classroom to answer questions, or even guarantee interviews to certification completers.

While a handful of Virginia's CBLOs have the capacity to provide a full complement of IET (Integrated Education and Training) services to their clients (see page 22 IET and other key legal definitions), most nonprofit literacy organizations serve adults who read at or below a 5th grade level. Many are referred from public adult education programs and WIB partners because these adults are not ready or able to receive instruction that starts at the 5th grade level. As a result, in some cases, neither the CBLO nor their clients are ready

to meet all three of the IET requirements of providing "adult education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster for the purpose of educational and career advancement" (Final WIOA regulations at 34 CFR §463.3). Often, CBLOs are able to provide clients – most of whom work one or two low-paid, low-skilled jobs – with contextualized and integrated adult education and literacy services and workforce preparation activities but face challenges in approaching the workforce training requirement of IET instruction, since low literate adults may need to more fully develop their literacy skills in order to successfully participate in a training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster or to master the assessments for major industry-recognized, high quality credentials in economic sectors such as health care, hospitality and tourism, or advanced manufacturing.

While most of Virginia's CBLOs are striving to join the career pathways system and offer fully integrated IET instruction with community partners, such a transition will take much training, effort, and funding. Major funders, who once supported one- or two-year projects to individual organizations, have shifted their donations to grant proposals that seek community impact through a broad spectrum of collaborative partnerships and community resources over a longer strategic time period.

The change in funders' focus occurred around the same time that the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was

Disabilities and the Adult Learner: DARS Partners with VALRC

by KATE KAEGI

For many adults, returning to the classroom can be intimidating. For some adults the classroom adds additional frustration and stress due to learning disabilities that may or may not be diagnosed.

According to the [2016 Disability Statistics Annual Report](#), in 2015, 34.9% of people with disabilities in the U.S., aged 18-64 and living in the community, were employed compared to 76% of people without disabilities – a gap of 41.1 percentage points. Career Pathways for Individuals with Disabilities (CPID) is helping to address this gap in Virginia. This 5-year grant was awarded to the Department for Aging and Rehabilitation Services (DARS) and the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI). Their goal is to increase opportunities for individuals with disabilities within career fields that are in demand and provide multiple opportunities for advancement and growth.

One aspect of CPID is aligning resources within the community. This is where DARS and the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center (VALRC) have come together to develop an online learning opportunity. Collaborators included Katie Bratisax, Instructional Technology Specialist, VALRC; Kate Rolander, Workforce Education Specialist, VALRC; Paula Martin, Occupational Therapist, DARS; and Kate Kaegi, Virginia Manufacturers Association Liaison, DARS.

This past spring, they worked in collaboration to develop a Blackboard learning course titled Disabilities and the Adult Learner: Utilizing Universal Design for Learning, Assistive Technologies, and Supportive Services to Enhance Instruction. This six-week course helps adult educators develop and strengthen their understanding of adults with learning disabilities. Each week, students in the pilot cohort discussed

a specific learning disability, an overview of assistive technology that could be helpful for that disability, and an opportunity to learn and share a resource available in their community that could help their students. Specific weekly topics included the American with Disabilities Act and legal responsibilities; Universal Design; Etiquette and Classroom Management; and Self Disclosure, Disability Services, and Screening Tools.

The discussions within this course helped me to appreciate how much time, effort and passion go into the curriculum developed for adult students. It's important for adult educators to provide the opportunity for many students to discuss their disability. This curriculum offers tools and resources for students allowing them to gain greater access to education and employment. The Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies of DARS and DBVI are geared toward helping individuals with disabilities find employment. Eligibility for services is individualized, so I would recommend that adult educators refer anyone who has a disability (whether it is diagnosed or not), wants to work, and has difficulty getting and/or keeping a job due to their disability. Referrals and information about services can be found at <https://www.vadars.org/apply.htm> (DARS) and https://www.vdbvi.org/voc_rehab.htm (DBVI). ∴

Kate Kaegi is Virginia Manufacturers Association (VMA) Liaison with the Department for Aging and Rehabilitation Services.

Visit www.valrc.org/training/ondemand.html
to learn more about online
courses, including Disabilities
and the Adult Learner.

passed. Instruction offered in grassroots literacy programs is changing, and the momentum of this change is driven by training and workshops provided at national conferences (COABE, AAACE, ProLiteracy) as well as at the state level (VAILL, VAACE, and VLF conferences), where public and private programs share how: 1) best practices drive the changes, 2) IET can be designed for the lowest level learners, 3) partnerships enhance learner outcomes and community impact, and 4) research informs academic instruction, workforce training, and contextualized curriculum. Overall, Virginia's CBLOs are integrating literacy instruction with teaching basic workforce and digital literacy skills, working with WIOA community partners and businesses, and soliciting collaborative or regional grants from funders.

A Variety of Strategies

Five years ago, the desire to make a transformative difference in learners' lives and an impact on the economic health of the community played a vital role in Literacy Council of Northern Virginia's (LCNV) decision to redesign instructional services for their largely ESOL student population, many of whom possessed poor literacy skills in their native language. LCNV's website addresses reasons for the change: "Factors driving and supporting our change process include the new federal emphasis on workplace skills development in adult education programs and sustaining LCNV's reputation for quality research-based educational programs." And so [Destination Workforce](#) was formed.

In the first year after the transformation (which is ongoing), LCNV delivered instruction to the staff of a local retirement home. The administrators of both organizations agreed to a contract that concretely spelled out the terms of on-site instruction and curriculum required for workers. Two cohorts of ESOL learners received intense instruction (3 classes per week) over an 8-week class period. Each course was taught by credentialed instructors with the

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Intensity of instruction has paid off for Refugee and Immigration, Commonwealth Catholic Charities, with 73% of clients obtaining employment.

aid of trained volunteers. Learners perfected their job and literacy skills on-site, working with kitchen tools while learning essential kitchen vocabulary, for example. LCNV also involved volunteer retirees to act as mentors between classes and to help learners practice speaking, listening, and pronunciation skills. These intensive student-centered classes promoted skills development and created stronger career pathways for students unaccustomed to our work culture. On-site classes eliminate the barriers of work schedules and transportation that many low-skilled, hourly employees face when seeking further education. (See the cover story in this issue for more information about LCNV's Destination Workforce.)

In Williamsburg, Literacy for Life (LFL) actively partners with local businesses in the health care and hospitality and food services sectors. These partners share their curriculum guidelines and textbooks so that LFL can develop contextualized English courses for learners interested in careers in these sectors and prepare them for the appropriate certifications, such as the ServSafe food handler certification, a certificate in the nurse aid program, or the basic knowledge needed to complete the phlebotomist training program and the EKG technician training program. Because most certification programs require a high-school degree or its equivalency, LFL also offers GED® prep classes for ELLs. Partners visit classrooms to answer questions, or, as is the case with two retirement communities, guarantee interviews to students who receive the food handler certification.

BEACON for Literacy in Prince William County created a workforce program, BEACONworks, to increase ESOL student enrollment in the caregiver pre-training program. This initiative

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Meet Heidi Silver-Pacuilla, Virginia's New Adult Education Coordinator (continued from p. 3)

In 2004, my family moved to Vienna, VA, and I began working at the American Institutes for Research, joining both the adult education and the special education technology groups. Over the seven years I was there, I was able to work on an incredible range of projects, including [TEAL](#), which initially focused on boosting writing instruction with adult learners and has since expanded to include numeracy instruction.

I also served on the National Coalition for Literacy as a volunteer board member for four years and was elected President in 2010. Leading a coalition was a whole new challenge! We did some good work that year, supporting and expanding the Adult Literacy Caucus in the House of Representatives and co-hosting, with the Institute for Women's Policy Research, a symposium on women literacy learners.

In 2011, I joined the U.S. Department of Education, in the Division of Adult Education and Literacy, in what is now the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE). For nearly six years, I led the Applied Innovations and Improvement Team, which oversees the professional

development projects supported through national leadership funds, and provided leadership to the office on technology initiatives. This initiative is called [LINCS](#). During the past few years, OCTAE worked to bring all of the national activities onto LINCS to create a single, credible site of resources and learning for adult educators around the country – there really is something for every practitioner. LINCS also recently launched the [Learner Center](#) to connect adult learners to online resources to supplement their learning; it is freely available, mobile-friendly, and available in English and Spanish.

I also had the privilege of being deeply involved with the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) [Study of Adult Skills](#), which released its first wave of data in the fall of 2013. This international study provides rich, current, and startling data that makes clear the interconnectedness of education, skills, well-being, and economic prospects for adults in the U.S., and contrasts U.S. performance in literacy, numeracy, and digital problem-solving with our global



PLUGGED IN VA COMES TO REGION 15

(continued from p. 5)

customer service and hospitality. That brings us to potential new partnerships: we've met with Goodwill, which has some great facilities with Thomas Nelson on the peninsula, and we're also communicating with Reynolds about their culinary arts programs.

The other partnership we're working to strengthen for sustainability is with our One-Stops or Resource Workforce Centers. We discovered that Reynolds wasn't on

their eligible trainer provider list, and Mary Jo quickly filed the paperwork necessary to change that. We've been in conversation with Adult and Dislocated Worker WIOA specialists, discussing how we can encourage coenrollment with our students who are eligible for WIOA Title I funding.

What lessons learned from Region 15's first year of Plugged In VA would you like to share with *Progress* readers?

Destination Workforce®: Working Towards Literacy

(continued from front page)

was led by one teacher and three class aides, keeping the student-instructor ratio around 3:1. The course curriculum covered the very basics of workforce-English readiness to enable new immigrants to assimilate into the world of U.S. employment.

In the classroom, the students started tentatively but made great strides in a short period of time. The students' initial fears of learning a new language – for some, this was their first formal classroom experience – evaporated quickly, and they readily made introductions and spoke about their newfound English skills by the end of the course. One of the key achievements that the students reported was their ability to speak about their personal information (such as their address, name and phone number) and their improved comfort and confidence while speaking English. The testing results also demonstrate just how far these students have come in a short period of time: all but one of the post-tested students made gains in their Best-Plus 2.0 scores. In fact, a majority of these students jumped one or even two Educational Functioning Levels! The husband of one of the students recently wrote, "Although the duration of this course was short and its content was very basic, [my wife] has learnt a lot. She is so happy the way she was [taught] and treated by her class teacher and class aides. According to some of her classmates who have been to other similar classes, this was the best class they have ever been [in]." LCNV is thrilled to provide these students with the first steps toward the path to workforce readiness and is already planning a follow-up class for the



LCNV's City of Alexandria Destination Workforce® class learns about personal information (photo courtesy of Ruba Afzal and LCNV)

same cohort focused on their speaking skills and how to approach the job application process.

One of the core competencies in Destination Workforce® programs is to improve the learners' understanding of formal speech. Success is measured when formal requests by supervisors are understood correctly the first time, leading to higher levels of productivity and better communications. In industries where formal requests come from customers, such as hospitality, this improves levels of customer service and satisfaction. An example of Destination Workforce® in the hospitality industry is LCNV's partnership with B.F. Saul's Crowne Plaza in Tysons Corner, VA.

LCNV began its partnership with B.F. Saul with the help of Tysons Partnership, a nonprofit collaborative of Tysons Corner Stakeholders. B.F. Saul had previously tried on-site ESL instruction for hospitality staff that was met with limited success, and sought a partnership with LCNV to increase

employee successes in learning English. With twelve different employees participating, the Crowne Plaza-Tysons Corner class is off to a great start. Curriculum is focused on the day-to-day service provided by these employees, all of whom are housekeeping or banquet staff. One of the goals outlined by B.F. Saul is for their employees to “Know Your Hotel.” This means that employees will be able to answer standard job-related questions such as “where is the pool?” On an average day in the classroom, employees can be seen practicing dialogues about special requests for room preparation, or learning how to answer questions from customers about food options. During the development of this program, Crowne Plaza-Tysons Corner has been an outstanding partner. Employees meet twice a week for two hours while on the clock, and receive free lunch during class time. LCNV applauds Crowne Plaza-Tysons Corner for making this investment in the professional development of its dedicated employees.

LCNV will be expanding its Destination Workforce® programs with the help of new and committed partners during the 2018 fiscal year. The Literacy Council looks forward to expanding access to employee literacy programs with even more partners in the coming months. ∴

Christopher Griffiths is Communications Coordinator for the Literacy Council of Northern Virginia.

Endnotes

- i. McHugh, M. & Morawski, M. (2015) *Immigrants and WIOA services: Comparison of sociodemographic characteristics of native- and foreign-born adults in the United States*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.
- ii. PolicyLink and The USC Program for Environmental and Regional Equity. (2015) *Equitable growth profile of Fairfax County*. Oakland, CA: PolicyLink.

Resource Spotlight: CLASP

The Center for Law and Social Policy ([CLASP](#)) is a national, nonpartisan, anti-poverty organization advancing policy solutions that work for low-income people. According to their website, CLASP staff “know there is no silver bullet, so we put good ideas together for maximum impact—such as ‘two-generational’ approaches that help both children and parents escape poverty.” CLASP publications address legal and technical issues, such as WIOA challenges and opportunities, in language that is accessible to educators and other stakeholders. Key publications highlight the role of integrated education and training under WIOA:

- **[Integrated Education and Training: Model Programs for Building Career Pathways for Participants at Every Skill Level](#)** (www.tinyurl.com/claspIETmodels) This memo highlights several career pathway models that use Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs at every skill level.
- **[Integrated Education and Training Strengthens Career Pathways, Prepares Students for Good Jobs](#)** (www.tinyurl.com/claspIET) Report author Judy Mortrude explains, “IET disrupts legacy structures of adult education and training ... CLASP and the Texas Workforce Commission conducted a national survey of adult education providers to learn more about IET models, funding mechanisms, and partnerships across the country.” ∴



The Revolution in Virginia's Community-based Literacy Organizations: Transforming Instruction to Teach Workforce Skills to the Underserved

(continued from page 11)

is expected to increase student employment outcomes by helping students explore career options, search for and apply for jobs, understand workplace culture, and advance in their current positions. Students pursuing careers as professional caregivers are guided by volunteer registered nurses through 14 weeks of instruction that includes medical terminology and procedures, digital technologies, and Certified Nurse Aide/Home Health Aide instruction in preparation for entering accredited clinical training programs. Students interact with licensed CNAs/HHAs and representatives from area training institutions who offer advice to job seekers. Participants also have an opportunity to receive CPR certification in partnership with local CNA/HHA training institutions, including Excel Health Institute and Astar Training Institute.

Refugee and Immigration, Commonwealth Catholic Charities (Richmond, Hampton Roads, and Roanoke), provides an intensive 5-day-a-week, 8-week course in integrated ESL/pre-employment education with a focus on hard skills and language that immigrants and refugees need to learn to attain their first U.S. jobs. Instruction focuses on resumé writing, an introduction to job skills, expectations and work ethics, job vocabulary, job applications, and effective workplace communication as well as hard skills training that focuses on the hospitality and service industries. The organization prepares refugees, many of

whom are illiterate in their native language, for immediate employment after the classes are over. Intensity of instruction has paid off for this CBLO, with 73% of clients obtaining employment (surpassing the NRS target of 41%). The average rate of improvement for students on the pre-employment post-test for FY 15-16 was 146%. The organization's goals include maintaining contact with local workforce centers, amending and modifying the pre-employment training curriculum to include soft skills on occupations or occupational clusters identified by the local Workforce Development Board Plan, with an emphasis on housekeeping, factory work and sewing, and customer service/cashiering. These instructional modules will be based on jobs available in the communities that the organization serves.

Hogar Hispano, Commonwealth Catholic Charities, has an agreement to offer courses to Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC) students, who also co-enroll in NVCC classes. Course completers will receive continuing education units (CEUs), which measure the number of hours a learner has invested in a certain workshop development topic. Under this agreement, Hogar will implement a new ESOL childcare course, pending approval from NVCC for the curriculum and instructor. ESOL students will learn industry-specific vocabulary and communication skills related to childcare and the health care and social assistance industry sectors. Students in this course can also earn Heartsaver pediatric first aid CPR certification in order to become more employable. Hogar relies on its data to study the needs of their learners, finding that 86% of ESOL students expressed a goal in getting a job or a better job, 27% are unemployed, and 28% are interested

Widely various workforce and pre-employment courses offered by CBLOs throughout the Commonwealth are designed to target specific student populations based on local needs.

in working in the childcare sector. Labor market information shows that the health care and social assistance sector is the third most in-demand in the region.

The variety of workforce and pre-employment courses offered by CBLOs throughout the Commonwealth is designed target specific student populations based on local needs. Literacy Volunteers of America-Prince William has created a curriculum for job readiness for professionals. This course provides instruction in professional resumés, mock interviews, guided online job searches

Literacy Volunteers of America - Prince William provides ... discussions of security clearance, background checks, and credit reports specifically targeted to ESOL students who have at least a Bachelor's degree in their own country.

and applications, and discussions of security clearances, background checks, and credit reports specifically targeted to ESOL students who have at least a Bachelor's degree in their home country. Tutors with professional and government experience are recruited to teach and mentor students who need assistance outside of class time. Suffolk Literacy Council's (SLC) goal is to help students attain and maintain employment through acquiring general technology skills. SLC has formalized a partnership with the Educational Opportunity Centers' TRIO program (EOC TRIO) and the Pruden Center for Industry and Technology. EOC TRIO helps SLC students to increase educational and job attainment and technology competence; TRIO coaches help students complete applications and set goals. The Pruden Center proctors the GED® test and offers certification training as well as pre-GED® and GED® classes. In Southside Virginia, five small, rural CBLOs have begun year two of a two-year pilot program funded by the Paul M. Angell and Virginia Literacy Foundations called PluggedInVirginia Pathways. This contextualized workplace curriculum teaches

the top six professional soft skills to adult learners who read at levels from 2nd through 4th grade equivalency, transitioning into 5th grade reading equivalency. Each lesson incorporates reading, writing, numeracy, and digital literacy skills and offers opportunities for teamwork, building critical thinking skills, communication, and professional behavior.

Conclusion

CBLOs largely serve adult learners who read at or below the 5th grade level. Even at this low literacy level, most of their clients already have jobs and are looking to improve their employability skills, to find a better job or retain a job. These adult learners are seeking short-term results with outcomes that improve their employability prospects. Such results are only possible when learners receive instruction from CBLOs that work in concert with community partners and businesses to offer intense, contextualized instruction that targets career clusters. As this article relates, programs have found a variety of approaches that suit their regions and community partners. Careful attention to client needs and labor market information ensures that instruction is relevant to the jobs that learners seek in their communities and will help adult learners embark on a lifelong career pathway ladder to prepare them for the workplace of the future. ::

Victoire Gerkens Sanborn is Literacy Specialist at the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center.

The Rural Virginia Horseshoe Initiative

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community college, but to help students make college and career plans that are right for them and their families.

The initiative's second strategy is more of a recovery strategy, and it targets adults. Originally, the strategy focused on adults who do not have a GED® credential, offering \$1000 incentives for earning their high school equivalency and then enrolling in community college. The \$1000 could pay for tuition or for reducing barriers to attendance (for example, putting new tires on the car so that someone could actually make it to college).

Over ten years, the Rural Virginia Horseshoe Initiative is designed to do two things: cut in half the number of high school students not graduating (right now in the region 1 in 5 students are not graduating; the initiative aims to change that to 1 in 10) and double the number of credentials adults are earning (those could be associate's

or four-year degrees or certain types of certifications). The initiative is just beginning the fourth year of a four-year pilot period. Of the fourteen of Virginia's 23 community colleges that are located in the footprint of the horseshoe, nine are participating in the pilot:

- Eastern Shore Community College
- Paul D. Camp Community College
- Danville Community College
- Patrick Henry Community College
- New River Community College
- Mountain Empire Community College
- Southwest Virginia Community College
- Dabney S. Lancaster Community College
- Blue Ridge Community College

"It's important to note," said Project Director Lane, "this is a pilot, so we're trying to demonstrate whether something works well or not." Because the incentives for adult learners were not working well as written, a major change going into program year

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**Must meet certain eligibility requirements.*

"I was living two different lives and was about to have a son. I wanted to get my GED before he came. I wanted to change for him. I couldn't force him to go to school if I never had. Now he will do it because I did."

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Patrick Henry Community College



- Full-time Maintenance Technician and Mechatronics and Industrial Electronics graduate.

Dontra Penn's success story is featured in the Rural Virginia Horseshoe Initiative recruitment flyer focused on Education and Training Incentives. The downloadable flyer can be customized with local contact information (see www.tinyurl.com/rvhiflyer).