

Training class helps people find green jobs

BY DEBORAH HIRSCH • COURIER-POST STAFF • JULY 1, 2009

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CAMDEN — State and local officials today will recognize 16 tri-county residents for completing a "green jobs" training program in Camden.

The 12-week training program launched in April as part of Gov. Jon S. Corzine's Energy Master Plan, which calls for \$1 billion of public and private investment into energy efficiency and renewable energy.

With a \$300,000 grant from the Conserve to Preserve Foundation of the New Jersey Resources Corp. and about \$1.7 million from the N.J. Department of Labor and Workforce Development, state officials hired staff to develop the curriculum and train workers at sites in Camden, Trenton, Newark and Somerset.

More than 300 workers are expected to graduate from the four centers over the course of a year.

Locally, the Green Jobs Training was held at the Camden-based Hispanic Family Center of Southern [New Jersey](#).

Coordinator Megan Barbano-Maxwell worked with county employment centers to recruit interested job candidates. Every weekday morning, certified energy auditors and analysts taught the students how to test a home for energy-efficiency, air-seal buildings, inspect weatherization and install insulation. Students also learned basic thermodynamics.

In addition, the students also went over life and job skills to help them become well-rounded job candidates, Barbano-Maxwell said. They attended workshops on financial management, [computers](#), nutrition, environmental awareness, job safety and labor unions. During their last week of training, they went into homes to test out their newly acquired technical skills as assistant building analysts and air sealers.

Now that they've completed the training, the center will work with local heating/air conditioning [companies](#), builders, public utilities and developers to place them into paid internships. The state will commit additional money to reimburse the employers up to half of a minimum \$15 hourly wage during their three- to six-month internship.

Once those internships end, Barbano-Maxwell said, the hope is that the companies will hire their interns as regular staff members. If not, she said, the center will work with them to find another job.

The center has already contacted 13 companies and Barbano-Maxwell said she believed more jobs would become available as government officials continue funding environmental projects through economic recovery efforts. Already, she said, many companies are looking to hire energy auditors as a result of various tax credits and incentives encouraging homeowners to become more energy-efficient.

Barbano-Maxwell said the green jobs training program not only supports those who are unemployed or underemployed, but the work that they do will also benefit the community.

"We have so many people struggling right now to keep their homes and stay in their homes," she said. With energy updates, these homeowners can [save money](#) by reducing their energy bills and contribute to improving the environment at the same time, she said.

Swedesboro resident John Coyle, 35, said he plans to study for the test to become a certified home-energy auditor now that he's finished the training program.

"Green jobs, that's where we're going as a country," Coyle said. "There's always going to be something here."

The center begins training a group of 20 people on July 6. A third and final session will start in September.

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Photo provided

Marcus Watkins of Merchantville caulks a basement window as part of his green jobs training.

MORE INFORMATION

Those interested in participating in the 'green jobs' training program must:

Be at least 20 years old.

Score at the seventh-grade level or higher on the Test of Adult Basic Education.

Pass a drug test and possess a high school diploma or GED and a driver's license.

For more information, contact Megan Barbano-Maxwell at (856) 964-4692.

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