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## **This Employment Bootcamp Might Land Those Attending A Really ‘Premiere’ Job**

Would you attend an employment skills course if it meant you were guaranteed a job interview at the end?

That was the end result of a three-day “Employment Bootcamp” Feb. 22-24 when the City of Reidsville, Rockingham Community College, and a local industry partnered to teach applicants the soft skills needed in today’s job market. As long as applicants showed up on time and participated in the entire 12-hour course, they were given the opportunity to interview with Premiere Finishing and Coating, a Reidsville company that pre-finishes hardwood flooring on a contract basis for multiple distributors and retailers across the U.S. and worldwide.

The idea grew out of a meeting between RCC’s HRD Coordinator Sharon Galloway, the City’s Economic Development Director Jeff Garstka, and Shawn Hart of Premiere Finishing and Coating. The three discussed ways to improve local workforce development. Soft skills include things such as resume building, punctuality, appropriate dress, and enhanced interviewing skills.

“During some initial meetings with the City and with Rockingham Community College, we stressed the lack of soft skills in our workforce,” said Hart, Operations Manager at Premiere Finishing and Coating. “The idea of the City, RCC, and Premiere partnering to create this class and provide a potential pipeline of individuals to suit our growing employment needs was unique, and we fully supported this endeavor.”

While RCC had done similar types of classes, this is the first of its kind where participants were promised an opportunity for employment at a local company. It is also the first time the course was offered in a 12-hour condensed version, which has traditionally been 10 individual days of coursework.

“The community college is the crossroad for employers who need skilled, prepared workers, and for the unemployed or underemployed who need the training to be job-ready,” said Laura Coffee, Dean of Workforce Development & Continuing Education at RCC. “The City of Reidsville is creating a climate where businesses can locate and expand through its commitment to workforce development. Contrary to perception, there are plenty of jobs available in Rockingham County. The innovative partnership of Rockingham Community College, the City

of Reidsville, and local business and industry will help meet the needs of employers and those seeking employment."

Reidsville Mayor Jay Donecker agrees.

"Collaborations like this show we are a 'can do' City," he said. "We want to not only bring new industries to Reidsville and Rockingham County, but we also want to help our industries and businesses solve any issues they may be facing whether it is one step or many years to the goal."

It truly is a "win-win" for all involved – for RCC as it seeks to educate and meet the needs of local industries, for the City as it wants to provide current and potential industries with a great worker pool, and for Premiere as it looks for more employable and more productive employees. Officials hope that the success of this public-private partnership education and training effort will be replicated by other local companies seeking basic skills for their job openings.

"The response we had from individuals wanting to take the class was very high," noted Garstka, who taught the free three-day bootcamp at Reidsville City Hall. "Other companies have already inquired about signing up for the class.

"Although the class was designed specifically for one company's needs, the big picture benefit is that the students were able to upgrade their skill sets and be better prepared for the job market in general," he continued. "This program was a perfect example of not only a public-private partnership that could serve as a model for other companies in Reidsville, but also other communities who face the same labor market challenges."

Participants came away from the bootcamp feeling better about their job chances.

"I feel this course gave me a little more hope that I will be able to get a job and improve my interview skills," said one student. Another said, "I learned things about how to build a better resume and how to present myself on paper and in person."

The success of this program for both potential applicants and prospective employers is key as RCC and the City of Reidsville look to go forward with more bootcamps, explained Galloway. "It is a really good start."

*If your company is interested in this type of program, please contact Jeff Garstka, Reidsville Economic Development Director, at 336-347-2307 or email him at [jgarstka@reidsvillenc.gov](mailto:jgarstka@reidsvillenc.gov).*