

# BC3's free apprenticeship readiness program set for February

Course to help 16 participants navigate membership applications to regional trade unions

Dec. 15, 2017

(Butler, PA) Butler County Community College will offer a free monthlong apprenticeship readiness program employing a nationally recognized curriculum designed to prepare 16 participants for applications with Western Pennsylvania building and construction trade unions, according to Kathleen Strobel, BC3's coordinator of business training.

BC3's apprenticeship readiness program, like that offered by three other Western Pennsylvania community colleges through May, is intended to assist those interested in the trades to successfully apply to and be accepted into tuition-free apprenticeship training programs with 16 unions and their partner contractors, Strobel said.



Matthew Price, 37, of Monaca, and his family are shown in this undated photo. Price, laid off in August, attended the Community College of Beaver County's monthlong apprenticeship readiness program and expects to begin training with the Carpenters Union Local 441 in January. Butler County Community College will offer the free apprenticeship readiness program Feb. 19 through March 15.

BC3's 150-hour program, to be held from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays from Feb. 19 through March 15, will utilize the comprehensive multi-craft core curriculum (MC3) developed and tested by the North America's Building Trades Unions, Strobel said.

Thirty hours will be conducted at regional building and construction trade union training centers and at other locations, where participants will tour facilities and receive hands-on instruction with tools and materials. Classroom sessions will address construction industry orientation, tools and materials, construction health and safety, blueprint reading, basic math for construction and green construction.

Butler County and Westmoreland County community colleges, along with the community colleges of Allegheny and Beaver counties, created the apprenticeship readiness program in concert with trade unions representing boilermakers, bricklayers, masons, electricians, elevator constructors, heat and frost insulators, ironworkers, painters, plumbers, roofers and waterproofers, sheet metal workers, sprinkler fitters, steam fitters and others.

A \$200,000 sector partnership national emergency grant, in conjunction with state Department of Labor and Industry resources, is funding the apprenticeship readiness program offered at the four community colleges.

Participants must be 18 or older, possess a valid driver's license and access to personal transportation, hold a high school diploma or GED, have the ability to perform physical work and pass drug and criminal background checks.

## Participant: Program information “priceless”

Married father of three Matthew Price, 37, of Monaca, was notified in July that he would be laid off from his position as a test technician from a company that manufactures parts for nuclear power plants.

Twenty-seven-year-old Matt Armstrong, a North Baldwin deliveryman, wants to marry the woman he has been dating for two years, have children and buy a house.

Through their participation in CCBC's apprenticeship readiness program, they have been accepted into building and construction trade unions, and anticipate tuition-free training, job security and bright futures.

“The information you get from (the program) is priceless,” said Armstrong, who begins an 18-week course through Steamfitters 449 in June and expects to start a full apprenticeship in October.



Matt Armstrong, 27, of North Baldwin, attended the Community College of Beaver County's monthlong apprenticeship readiness program in the summer and expects to begin an 18-week course through Steamfitters 449 in June. Butler County Community College will offer the free apprenticeship readiness program from Feb. 19 through March 15.

Price said the apprenticeship readiness program, of which he learned through CareerLink in Beaver County and attended at CCBC in September, “really sets you up for getting your foot in the door for the union of your choice.”

He applied to and was accepted by Carpenters Union Local 441, and has an interview pending with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers 712.

## Job interview prep key, dad says

“The program came at a pretty good time,” Price said. “The timing worked out for when I was laid off. It really helped set things up long-term for getting to where I would like to be.”

The father of daughters ages 8 and 9, and of a 1-year-old son, credits the apprenticeship readiness program’s interviewing skills courses and expects to begin an apprenticeship with the carpenters union next month – about the time his second son is due to be born.

“The instructor identified some key topics that usually come up in these types of interviews and helped us to prepare for them,” Price said. “And we did mock interviews among ourselves.”

Prior to the apprenticeship readiness program, Price said he struggled in being able to identify his strengths and weaknesses during a job interview.

“Typically in interviews you have to answer something in a certain way,” he said.

Now, he said, he would tell a potential employer that “No matter what I do, I always dedicate myself. I am a go-getter. It doesn’t matter whether I am working by myself or in a team environment, I am always basically the one who is asking for the new tasks and responsibilities. I never shy away from those types of things.”

## “I just found out ... I was accepted”

Armstrong, a 2009 graduate of Baldwin High School, studied welding at a career school in Allegheny County, but “I really didn’t have a career path,” he said. “I also went to school for graphic design. I was trying to figure out another career path. My father met somebody who was about to retire from the Steamfitters and he thought I would really like that. And I just got really interested in it.”

Armstrong said he completed the apprenticeship readiness program at CCBC in the summer, applied to the Steamfitters 449 in September, took a union test in October and had his interview in November.

“I just found out last week that I was accepted,” he said.

The apprenticeship readiness program “definitely” changed his life, Armstrong said, as will the job security he expects to enjoy as a member of Steamfitters 449.

“After they finish that cracker plant, that is going to set off a chain reaction,” he said of Shell Chemical’s ethane cracker facility in Monaca, reported to be completed within five years and to provide temporary construction jobs to 6,000 workers.

“I need to know I can make a paycheck every week or every couple of weeks so I can feed my family once I get married and have kids,” Armstrong said. “I can get a house and finally start moving on with my life.”

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