



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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BUILDING & CONSTRUCTION CAREERS FOCUS OF THIRD ANNUAL COUNSELOR ACADEMY

The Workforce Investment Board of Western Illinois in cooperation with the Western Area Career System hosted the third annual Counselor Academy for Career Guidance Counselors of Fulton, Schuyler, Hancock, and McDonough Counties on Tuesday, February 3, 2009 at the Western Illinois BTC in Macomb.

This partnership between employers and education was a collaborative effort between Blanche Shoup, Director of the Workforce Investment Office of Western Illinois and Joyce Taylor, Director of the Western Area Career System who plan career guidance events focusing on 16 career clusters. Previous years included Manufacturing and Healthcare, however, this year the spotlight was on Building & Construction careers.

The Building & Construction Industry is a major employer in this area and offers a promising career opportunity for young adults. The Career Guidance Counselors were briefed by Marty Helfers (West Central Illinois Building & Construction Trades Council), Steve Kaak (Plumbers Local #63), Pat Faley (Pipefitters Local #353), and Mike Hall (International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local #34).

The Union Trades representatives shared that all trades were in need of apprentices due to retirements. Marty Helfers, Associate Director, West Central Illinois Building & Construction Trades Council, stressed the salary opportunities in Union Trades by stating, "Workers from 6 out of the 10 Union Trades make more annual salary than recent college graduates with an undergraduate degree."

Jack Laverdiere of Laverdiere Construction Inc. provided a "real world" perspective. He echoed the Union Trades representative's sentiments on stressing the importance of good grades (particularly math) and soft skills for individuals interested in entering Union Trades. Further, he recommended that students participate in engineering technology and construction/building trades courses which promote mechanical abilities. In addition, attributes like being on time, attendance, communication, interviewing skills, dressing for success and motivation are critical to acceptance into the apprenticeships and success in the trade.

Raphael Obregon, Chairperson, Department of Engineering Technology and Ryan Phelps of Klinger & Associates briefed counselors on career opportunities in Construction Management and Architectural & Engineering and stressed the importance of the math and sciences in high school and to demonstrate leadership skills while in school through participation in volunteer activities.

The Counselor Academy proved to be an extremely valuable event in educating area Career Guidance Counselors and stimulating dialog between education and professionals in the Building & Construction industry. Many innovative and creative ideas were offered on how best to get the message out to students on the opportunities available to them.

For more information about the Counselor Academy and Career Opportunities in the Building & Construction Industry in Western Illinois, contact Blanche Shoup, Director, Workforce Investment Office, 1-800-548-8036.

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