

## **CCWorks + Caterpillar Youth Apprentice Program: Providing opportunities, developing talent**

**SANFORD** – Sometimes, it takes the efforts of an entire community to make a substantive change. A perfect example is the Central Carolina Works Program (CC Works), offered by Central Carolina Community College.

Private and public organizations collaborated to make CC Works a reality and continue to do so today. The Golden Leaf Foundation teamed with entities in Chatham, Harnett and Lee counties and worked as one community to ensure the take-off of this worthy initiative.

And the effort has proved more than worth it.

The 3-year-old CC Works offers high school dual enrollment, which means enrolled students can earn college credits for courses that also count toward their high school diploma—most frequently on their high school campus. This means high school juniors and seniors can earn one year plus of college credit expense-free through the North Carolina Career and College Promise program.

CC Works Committee Chairman Kirk Bradley says the growing number of students engaged in CC Works is a testament to its relevance.

“I’ve been very pleased with the success of CC Works,” said Bradley, a local property developer. “Getting advisors hired and trained by CCCC into the high schools with the sole mission of educating the students and their families, as well as the faculty and staff of Lee County School System (LCSS), on the benefits of Career and College Promise was the key to the success.

“Boots on the ground mattered, and the results speak for themselves,” he said. “Almost 40 percent of the eligible juniors and seniors at LCSS are enrolled in a career pathway at CCCC with almost two-thirds of them in Career and Technical pathways. Increasing the emphasis on post high school education is the key to our community having a workforce prepared for the 21<sup>st</sup> global economy. CC Works and its advisors are the linchpin to success.”

Here’s how it works: Career and College advisors, essential to the project’s success, meet not only with students, but also with parents, faculty and administrators to educate all parties about this dual enrollment advantage.

And what an advantage it is.

High school graduates who seek vocational or technical coursework can often graduate with not only their high school diploma, but also a certificate or diploma, which can lead to immediate, post-graduation job placement. For those pursuing a 4-year university degree, they will already have one plus years of college coursework under their belts.

The CCWorks program was originally developed by a consortium of CCCC administrators, local business and industry leaders, and school system officials from each of the three participating counties.

### ***Apprenticeship offers experience plus credentials***

Another program impacting Lee County’s economic fortitude is the Caterpillar Youth Apprentice Program in Welding. With manufacturing growth in North Carolina comes a dearth of highly-skilled workers to meet the demand, especially in welding.

That is until the formation of this important apprenticeship program.

Together, CCCC, Caterpillar's Sanford Fabrication Facility, Lee County Schools and the N.C. Department of Labor developed this program, one that not only prepares apprentices to enter the workforce, but offers preferential hiring status at Caterpillar.

Here's how it works: Select students simultaneously work on their high school studies, take welding courses at CCCC and train at Caterpillar in a paid position. Upon completion, apprentices earn a CCCC Welding Certificate as well as a N.C. Department of Commerce apprenticeship certificate—and, don't forget, a high school diploma.

Both programs are intentionally designed to foster an educated, trained workforce. As the numbers show, both programs succeed in that effort, making Lee County all the more economically attractive.