



Disadvantaged Liberty Street Residents Trained for Environmental Jobs

Winston-Salem, North Carolina

The disadvantaged residents of the Liberty Street Corridor in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, are developing technical skills to prepare them for increased employment opportunities. EPA's Winston-Salem Brownfields Job Training Pilot recently finished its second training course, bringing the total number of graduates to 32. Sixty percent of the class received employment in the environmental sector within two months of graduation, and are earning between \$8.50 and \$16.00 an hour. Program improvements in the second course led to higher retention and job placement rates.

Winston-Salem's three-mile Liberty Street Corridor was once home to a booming manufacturing center, anchored by R.J. Reynolds, one of the world's largest manufacturers of tobacco products. The post-World War II era, however, brought expansion to other areas of the city and economic decline along the Corridor. The unemployment rate for local residents skyrocketed to 83 percent, with 91 percent of residents living in poverty.

Job support services like those provided by the Northwest Piedmont Council of Governments Workforce Development Program (WDP) are critical to reducing these unemployment rates. Job Training Pilot participants are generally residents of the Liberty Street Corridor and surrounding areas who are referred to the WDP by neighborhood associations. The WDP is an essential component of the Job Training Program's success, as it identifies prospective students, provides life skills training, places students in appropriate training programs, and assists with job placement.

The curriculum for the Job Training Program was designed by local environmental practitioners and the academic community, including advisers from Forsyth Technical Community College (the teaching partner in the program), Wake Forest University, and Winston-Salem University. Before the second training course, a representative group of environmental consultants and contractors also reviewed the curriculum and offered suggestions. The 194-hour course provides technical and safety training that prepares students for employment in the waste management, private or public infrastructure, construction, demolition, and environmental and engineering consulting and contracting industries. Course work involves approximately 20 hours per week for 10 weeks, and includes both classroom and field instruction.



Students undergo training in Winston-Salem's Brownfields Job Training Program

JUST THE FACTS:

- The curriculum for the Job Training Program was designed by local environmental practitioners and the academic community.
- The 194-hour course provides technical and safety training that prepares students for employment in the waste management, private or public infrastructure, construction, demolition, and environmental consulting and contracting industries.
- The second training course recently finished, bringing the total number of graduates to 32. Sixty percent of the class received employment in the environmental sector within two months of graduation, and are earning between \$8.50 and \$16.00 an hour.

"For me, I now know there is a place for me in this world, and I will get a job which will test my intelligence and endurance while still allowing me to be myself and to maintain my integrity."

—Jody Hudson, graduate of the Winston-Salem Brownfields Job Training Program

By providing a clear description of the training through orientation sessions and a detailed syllabus, the program had a higher retention rate during its second session. Only two students dropped out of the second training course, as compared to seven in the first course. Similarly, job placement increased by expanding relationships with local businesses and involving them in the program. The Pilot sent monthly newsletters to employers that contained program background information and student biographies; held off-site training events at employer facilities; and organized a job fair that enabled businesses to meet students face to face. Tim Binkley, the Job Training Pilot coordinator and an instructor, shared his thoughts on the program. "I believe in the program strongly," said Binkley. "The sociological and economic implications are enormous in terms of benefits to the students and the community at large."

Jody Hudson is a graduate of the second training class who was offered a position at GeoScience and Technology before the course ended. The company provides assessment and remediation consulting for area brownfields projects, and has been a major supporter of the Job Training Program by offering its facilities and technicians for field training. Hudson expressed how the training changed her life: "For me, I now know there is a place for me in this world, and I will get a job which will test my intelligence and endurance while still allowing me to be myself and to maintain my integrity."

Winston-Salem's Brownfields Job Training Program has proven its success by graduating 32 students and finding employment for 20 students by the end of its second session. The program continues to improve due to the commitment of the City of Winston-Salem, the Pilot coordinator, instructors, the Northwest Piedmont Council of Governments Workforce Development Program, and Forsyth Technical Community College.

CONTACTS:

For more information contact
US EPA - Region 4 (404) 562-8660
Or visit EPA's Brownfields Web site at:
<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/>



*Students getting hands-on experience
in Winston-Salem's Brownfields Job
Training Program*