

Sample Press Release



SC Department of Employment and Workforce

NEWS RELEASE

Media Contact:

Dorothy Weaver

dweaver@dew.sc.gov

(803) 737-2013

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***** Media Advisory *****

WHAT: Back to Work Graduation**When: July 24, 2019, 10:00 a.m.****Where: Bowman Town Hall, 131 Poplar St., Bowman****Who: Sen. John Matthews will deliver the commencement address for 18 graduating individuals who will receive their Back to Work credentials.**

BACKGROUND: The Back to Work program was created in 2015 to assist individuals in transitional programs reenter the workforce. By partnering with organizations around the state, the S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce (DEW) offers this intensive work-skill course to promote long-term financial stability and independence.

The late Bowman Mayor Marion Glenn, Jr. saw an opportunity to partner the Town of Bowman with DEW to offer the Back to Work program in his community. The curriculum is a 40-hour, boot-camp style program that assists participants in developing skills in the areas of interviewing, resume writing, conflict resolution, financial planning, dressing for success, understanding diversity in the workplace, soft skills and more. Each participant works with a coach who mentors them with the goal of obtaining employment and self-sufficiency. At the end of the program, a targeted hiring event is held to give the participants the opportunity to interview with employers that are looking to hire talent with their skills. All graduates receive a certificate of completion at a graduation event.

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About DEW

The S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce (DEW) is putting South Carolinians to work. The agency invests in building a pipeline of quality workers, matches workers with jobs, and is a bridge for individuals who find themselves out of work for no fault of their own. This promotes financial stability and economic prosperity for employers, individuals and communities. [DEW](#) is dedicated to advancing South Carolina through services that meet the needs of the state's businesses, jobseekers and those looking to advance their careers.



BACKtoWORK

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2019 News Articles



[Back to Work Boot Camp teaches job skills](#) (03/31/2019)

Some had early accomplishments in the program, and some had honors toward the end of it, but all recent North-area graduates of the Back to Work Boot Camp of the S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce/S.C. Works showed pride in their achievements with their smiles.

The graduation ceremony took place March 21 at the The Challenge Center of the North Family Community School.

“The S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce and The Challenge Center are partners in an intensive job-training program that is enabling people to find jobs and take care of their families, said Workforce Consultant Tameka Johnson.

“The North Family Community School’s goal is to empower low-income families by giving them the tools and support needed to create better habits and to reach their full potential,” she said.

She said that during the intensive training program, her staff taught participants about soft skills, diversity in the workplace, workplace conflict, resume writing, mock interviews, dressing for success, and other job skills.

“These Back to Work graduation certificates are passports to a more productive life for participants who have been prepared to tackle barriers to employment such as lack of transportation or a GED or high school diploma,” Johnson said.

Capt. James Green, a 30-year law enforcement veteran with the Orangeburg County Sheriff’s Office, was the guest speaker for the graduation.

“Having the opportunity to meet you graduates a few months ago has been food for my soul,” Green said. “It has been exciting and has been a great program.”

Captain Green asked the graduates to take a few minutes to think about where they started and where they are at now. He compared them to being like young babies at the start of the Back to Work Boot Camp.



“You began to creep. You began to crawl, and you began to walk,” he said. “You have passed many, many milestones. ... Always think about believing in yourself.”

“You have got to keep on driving despite those obstacles that may be in your way.”

A video presentation put together by Keith Byrd of VET Success showed the graduates being a little reluctant at the beginning but being driven as the program progressed.

“These last weeks have been trying,” Byrd said. “We have come together as a family. It’s not how you start -- it’s how you finish.”

Deborah White, Regional Manager for the S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce, said during the issuing of certificates that several graduates were not able to attend but for good reason.

“Todd Reese received employment during his first week in the program. Theresa Washington received employment in the third week,” White said.

Back to Work Boot Camp graduates Terica Lamonte received a certificate of excellence for perfect attendance in the program and a silver certificate for her WIN testing with a four and above in all areas.

Lamonte and Theresa Washington, as well as graduates not present, received certificates and trophies for their accomplishments as well as bags from S.C. Works with information to assist them.

Challenge Center Director Sandy Sigmon said, “I am almost speechless because of your accomplishments. I am excited and happy because you have opportunities most people never see.”

Mrs. Sigmon encouraged the graduates of the program to continue their education.

“This town has so much potential. The surrounding area has so much potential,” she said.

Sigmon said The Challenge Center of the North Family Community School is going to continue to adjust to the needs of the students and is going to be flexible.

Students who do not have their GED can work toward obtaining it at the school. The North Family Community School is currently taking applications for GED classes. For more information, call 803-247-3433.



the Sumter ITEM

[Back to Work program teaches Sumter adults skills to remove barriers to job offers](#)

(12/14/2018)

A low unemployment rate in South Carolina also comes with the ramification that employers often find it difficult to fill current vacancies or hire new people who are ready to work in expanding opportunities.

Sumter's 3.9 percent unemployment rate in the state's vibrant economy - 2.2 million South Carolinians are now working - may mean those who are not working have faced barriers at the interview desk in tighter times.

A graduation ceremony at Central Carolina Technical College's Advanced Manufacturing Technology Training Center on Broad Street on Thursday for a new program represented a shift for some of those people toward being considered good hires.

"I don't know your history. I don't know your background. I don't know where you made a mistake. I don't know where it was you could have done something different," said Chris McKinney, executive director of Santee-Lynches Regional Council of Governments. "It's about how you responded to get back to where you are today. You chose to do something about it."

McKinney spoke to five women who represented the first to finish the Back to Work program, a six-week boot camp that taught them job-earning and job-succeeding skills such as resume writing, interview tips, how to dress for an interview, how to look someone in the eye, how to shake a hand and how to carry yourself confidently.





[Job training program helps grads excel with soft skills and resume writing \(11/24/2018\)](#)

Rodell Parker beams with pride when he thinks how far he's come following participation in a five-week intensive boot-camp training program designed to help him and others transition into the workforce.

Parker was one of six graduates recognized for participation in and successful completion of the South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce's Back to Work program during a graduation ceremony held at the Orangeburg SC Works Center on Oct. 26.

"It's a blessing to be graduating, starting a new career, getting on my feet and doing better. I've had a lot of interviews and am just waiting on a lot of calls back," Parker said.

The veteran work-study student, who is a graduate of both Claflin University and Denmark Tech, was no stranger to the employees at the Orangeburg SC Works Center.

He said he was appreciative of all the hard work the staff members put in helping him with resume writing, dressing for success and "learning how to work with other people in the community and workforce."

"It's a new experience for me. I'm very appreciative of them. They're a blessing. I've been knowing them for a while," he said, noting that he has a message for others who may be having a hard time finding the tools for a more productive life.

"Strive for what you need to get out of life and keep moving because you got a lot of people looking up to you," Parker said.

Parker was joined at the ceremony by fellow graduates Adrienne Cleckley, Tyris Glover and Michael McDonald. Graduates Betsy Callaway and De'Juan Lee were not present.

The state Department of Employment and Workforce administers the program in partnership with Victory Tabernacle Church of Orangeburg. The program produced its first group of graduates last year.

During the five-week program, the participants took part in mock interviews, learned soft skills, resume writing, how to dress for success and diversity in the workforce. DEW runs the program.

The participants also took a work-ready assessment to better inform them of job types that are suitable to their skill set. Additionally, they were part of the program's first reverse job fair, where employers were able to stop at job-seeker booths.



Local companies such as Hardee's, Dempsey Wood Products, Cracker Barrel and Allied Air also hosted a job fair for interviews with the recently graduated participants.

"This graduation is a tribute to our participants," said Tameka Johnson, a workforce consultant at the Orangeburg SC Works Center.

Orangeburg Sheriff Leroy Ravenell and S.C. House Rep. Jerry Govan, D-Orangeburg, were the featured speakers at the graduation. Both encouraged the graduates and said they should be proud of their achievement.

"You dedicated yourself to what you wanted to do and be in life. It's never too late," Ravenell said.

The sheriff said he didn't let growing up in Santee's Jack Branch community in a household with an alcoholic father who fought his mother deter his efforts to pursue his goals in life.

He said while both of his parents only had a third-grade education, that was also not a deterrent as he made his own way through school.

"You look good. We can't let what we go through define who we are or who we're going to be," said Ravenell, who went on to earn a bachelor of arts from Claflin University, where he also serves as an adjunct professor, and a master's degree from Troy University.

"That came from what I wanted to do. ... You have to have confidence in yourself. You might not believe it, but there's people looking up to you," Ravenell said.

Govan, an ordained minister, took his remarks from the book of Nehemiah, a biblical figure instrumental in the rebuilding and re-establishment of Jerusalem.

Like Nehemiah, Govan said the graduates had "a mind to work."

"It doesn't matter where you are in life, but it's where you're going. ... The first step in change is to be true to thyself. ... Something was planted and you said, 'I gotta do something different,'" Govan said.

"You made a choice to make a difference in your life. The first step in any journey ... begins with that first step. You today have made that first step," he said.

Cleckley also delivered remarks, stating that the program was worthwhile in that she and the other graduates learned everything from building resumes to resolving conflicts.

"We learned a lot in these five weeks," she said.

"We learned a lot from all of them as well," said Jeannette Franklin, a workforce specialist at the Orangeburg SC Works Center.





[Back to Work graduation opens doors for homeless individuals](#) (11/08/2018)

The S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce (DEW) is holding a Back to Work graduation ceremony November 9. Partnering with the Phoenix Center and its Lotus Program at Serenity Place, DEW's Back to Work program is a six-week boot camp that teaches homeless individuals job-earning and job-succeeding skills.

Rep. Bill Chumley, R-Woodruff will be the featured speaker when graduation diplomas will be handed out Friday morning at Long Branch Baptist Church in Greenville. The result of a public-private partnerships, these certificates are passports to a more productive life for participants who have been coached to overcome barriers to employment such as criminal records, lacking transportation or a more formal GED or high school education.

Four people will graduate Friday November 9 at 10:00 a.m. at the Long Branch Baptist Church located at 28 Bolt Street in Greenville. During this intensive job training program, DEW staff taught participants subjects such as soft skills, diversity in the workforce, conflict in the workplace, resume writing, mock interviews, dress for success and other job skills.

A key element in this initiative is that participants receive an individual career-readiness assessment that demonstrates their strengths and weaknesses, and points to the types of jobs that would allow them to reach their potential.

A unique feature of the *Back to Work* program is in the final stages of the boot camp. DEW and partner agencies – the Phoenix Center here in Greenville – work together to host a job fair with local employers. This critical step affords participants the opportunity to experience a hiring event and the interview process in a personalized setting, and it allows businesses to get to talk with several potential employees to find important workforce assistance.

For many, Friday's ceremonies may be their first graduation. The goal of DEW's *Back to Work* program is that the lessons being taught help participants get



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back on their feet with a clear path to employment so that they can better their lives for themselves and their families.

The Phoenix Center assists the citizens of Greenville County and the surrounding area in the prevention, treatment and recovery from substance use disorders by offering effective and affordable services. Their vision is that the individuals that they assist live free from the harmful effects of alcohol, tobacco, gambling, and other drugs.

The Lotus Program is an out-patient program, including interim housing at The Villas, which focuses on recovery after successful completion of residential treatment at Serenity Place. Serenity Place is The Phoenix Center's residential facility for women and children.

During their time with the Lotus Program, the women are encouraged and challenged to move toward improving their quality of life by gaining skills necessary for stable employment, continuing their education, connections with community resources, finding adequate housing and establishing a recovery network. Being in the Lotus Program can be a life-changing experience, or it could be one of several attempts to make the changes in their lives that they are hoping to achieve.

Also featured in upstatebizSC.com [here](#) and lowcountrybizSC.com [here](#).



Press Coverage



[SCDEW program offers a path back to work](#) (10/25/2018)

The diplomas that will be handed out Friday morning at the Orangeburg SC Works Center are passports to a more productive life for participants who have been coached to overcome criminal records and other barriers to employment such as lacking transportation and a more formal GED or high school education.

Partnering with Victory Tabernacle Church, the S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce's Back to Work program is a five-week boot camp that teaches job-earning and job-succeeding skills.

Rep. Jerry N. Govan Jr., D-Orangeburg, and Orangeburg County Sheriff Leroy Ravenell will speak at the graduation ceremony at 10 a.m. Friday, Oct. 26, at the Orangeburg SC Works Center located at 1804 Joe S. Jeffords Hwy.

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INDEX-JOURNAL

[Eight graduate from Back to Work program](#) (03/29/2018)

For the past year and a half, Tracy Rainey and her 12-year-old daughter have been homeless, moving from one shelter to another.

She'd been trying to escape the relationship for about a decade, but she said most of the shelters she went to only gave her two months to stay — not enough time to piece her life back together.

"I'd always wind up having to go back to my abuser, because there was never anywhere else to go," she said. "Then a few more places opened up that I found out about, and my family finally stepped in to help, and we were able to stay away and not go back, because every time we went back it was worse and worse and worse."

Rainey was finally able to escape the abusive relationship in August 2016, but she still struggled to find her footing while trying to get over the trauma of abuse.

"We've been bouncing around from shelter to shelter, from place to place," she said. "We've had to change (her daughter) schools, which was really hard."

On Thursday, Rainey said she was hopeful for the first time in years that she'd be able to make a new start. She was one of eight people to graduate from the State Department of Development and Workforce Development's Back to Work Program.

"I am a survivor of domestic violence and I have been running for 10 years," Rainey said. "It's taken me this long to get to this spot, but we are surviving and we are thriving."

DEW partnered with Meg's House to offer the eight graduates a two-week, boot camp-style course that helped them build skills such as resume development, conflict resolution and job interviewing.

"This is a big thing and I'm proud of it, and I want to go forward," Rainey said.

Bonnie Franklin, who also graduated from the program Thursday, said it has given her confidence.

"We learned personal health and wellness, we learned about resumes, we learned about PowerPoint, we learned about applying different skills to our resume and applying for jobs we have the skills for instead of just applying for jobs. Gosh, we



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learned so much,” she said. “... I’m feeling hopeful. Someone once told me the word hope stands for ‘Hold on, pain ends,’ and that’s the way I feel.”

Monika McGlohon, a workforce consultant who taught the course, told a crowd gathered for the ceremony she’s excited to see her students succeed.

“I am so very proud of you guys,” she said. “You have worked so hard to accomplish this for yourselves and everyone has faced obstacles in their lives they’ve had to overcome and I’d like to say these are some of the strongest and most determined people I’ve ever seen in my life.”

State Rep. Anne Parks, D-Greenwood, said the graduation was a pivotal moment for the eight participants.

“This is yours,” she said. “You earned it. You were dedicated and you worked hard for it. Also, this should bring great pride to your families because it’s hard enough to keep going on something you’ve accomplished, but to start over and to complete what you have done is just wonderful and I’m so proud of you.”

The program began in Columbia in 2016 and came to Greenwood this year. Prior to Thursday, the program has graduated 115 people since 2016, and about 70 percent of them have found employment.

Rainey said she’s looking forward to opening a new chapter in her life and getting back into the workforce.

“I need to, I want to and I’m ready,” she said. “If somebody will just give me a chance, I’ll go forward.”



COLUMBIA REGIONAL BUSINESS REPORT

[Program helps homeless people polish job skills](#) (10/25/2017)

Terry Pressley didn't expect much a few months ago when he heard about a job-training program called Back to Work.

The Kingstree native came to Columbia after falling on hard times and becoming homeless. He went through other job-training programs in an effort to get back on his feet, but didn't see any concrete results.

"All that happened was they basically sat you down in front of a computer and told you to search for a job," Pressley said. "That was about it. So I was skeptical about what one more program could offer."

This time, his experience proved to be completely different.

On Oct. 11, five weeks after trying one more time, Pressley stood with eight other Back to Work graduates in an auditorium, ready to pick up his diploma and begin work with a local construction company.

The men and women were the sixth group to complete the intense "boot-camp" style program run by the South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce in conjunction with sponsors from around the Midlands.

Back to Work focuses on helping homeless men and women develop basic skills they need to get and keep a job. They learn interview techniques, how to write a resume, conflict resolution and other tactics to enable them to make the transition to the workplace. The classes include role-playing activities where students go through mock interviews and learn how to handle various situations that can come up in a work environment.

DEW started the program in 2016. The agency works with Transitions, a Columbia facility that helps homeless people make the move to permanent housing, to find students for Back to Work.

Main Street United Methodist Church downtown provides classroom space. Palmetto Health's Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) team offers case management and referral services for participants.



The students get help every step of the way in looking for a job, including with their appearance. The Columbia Suit Program and Dress for Success provide appropriate business attire.

Graduates are also paired with a job coach who mentors them and helps them with their job search until they find a position.

The hiring process gets a jump start with a special job fair held for each graduating class on site at the agency's Hampton Street facility. Local employers meet one-on-one with the graduates for interviews.

With the current crop of graduates, 84 people have completed the program and 58 have found work, including Pressley and one other member of the current class. Back to Work graduates are currently working around the Midlands in retail, food service, construction and light manufacturing.

That success rate prompted DEW to establish a second Back to Work program in the Greenville area in the spring, focused on helping people who have recently completed drug rehabilitation find jobs. A third program is in the works for residents of the Catawba Reservation near Rock Hill.

What makes Back to Work more successful than other job-training programs is the intense focus on people skills, said Kisa Grant, program coordinator. This is especially important because some participants have not been in the workplace before or have gone many years without holding a job.

"We help them learn how to function in a diverse workplace and how to work with people who are different from them," Grant said. "That is especially important to help them maintain employment once they find a job."

Col. Craig J. Currey, CEO of Transitions, said clients at the facility volunteer to take part in Back to Work. Only about a third complete the program because of its intensity, he said.

"This is truly a boot camp to help get them ready for employment, and that is why it succeeds," Currey said. "The focus on people skills is important because they learn how to talk to people, how to present themselves and how to get hired. They also learn about courtesy and respect, which is vital because that is something that has been lost in a lot of society today. Courtesy will help them get hired and keep a job, because that is what employers and customers want and expect."

Pressley said Back to Work gave him a different kind of job-training experience because of the emphasis on people skills and personal connections. He said previous training programs didn't work for him because he was asked to begin a job search without any previous experience.



“The program coordinators with Back to Work actually contact potential employers and connect you with them,” he said. “They are with you every step of the way. That opportunity has paid off for me. This program is important because there are many more people out here like myself who need this opportunity.”



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[Back to Work Program](#) (10/11/2017)

Wednesday morning nine homeless men and women graduated the Department of Employment and Workforce's back to work program.

The five week boot camp style course helps develop skills in interviewing, resume writing, and problem solving.

It appears to be having a successful rate too. Officials tell us since the program began 56 of the 75 participants have been able to find employment.



Press Coverage



[DEW launches Back to Work program in Greenville \(06/01/2017\)](#)

The S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce (DEW) has expanded its Back to Work program into Greenville. Currently, eight people are in the new program. DEW has partnered with Serenity Place, a residential treatment facility for pregnant women, young mothers and their preschool age children.

Back to Work is a five-week, bootcamp-style program intended to help individuals develop skills in interviewing, resume writing, conflict resolution and more. Each person is assigned a job coach who mentors them with the goal of obtaining employment and self-sufficiency. At the end of the program, a job fair is held with employers actively seeking to fill openings.

DEW piloted this program in Columbia by partnering with Transitions, a Columbia-area homeless facility that helps people transition into permanent housing, to assist people who are homeless transition back into the workforce. Since it was launched a year ago, 75 people have graduated from the program and 52, or nearly 70 percent, are employed.

The Greenville Bank to Work program's graduation is set for June 23.



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