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13 complete St. Lucie County's Ready to Work Boot Camp

Port St. Lucie/June 14 – Thirteen recent graduates from St. Lucie County high schools completed the St. Lucie County Ready to Work Boot Camp on June 11. Some walked away from the ceremonies with both a certificate and a job offer.

In its fourth year, the boot camp's goal is to introduce career opportunities with local manufacturing and warehouse distribution employers to graduating high school students who are entering the workforce after high school. Attendance was capped this year due to COVID-19 protocols.

Attendees spent five activity-packed days touring local manufacturers and distributors as well as learning about resume and interview preparation, personal finance, workplace roles, and more. Expert Shutter Services, Indian River Select, Total Truck Parts, Southeast Elevator, Maverick Boat Group, Walmart Distribution Center, Pursuit Boats, Southern Eagle Distributing, A-1 Roof Trusses, Phoenix Metal Products, Derecktor Shipyard, and California Closets hosted tours.

"It's really cool what the companies have to offer," said Shanice Robinson, 19, a Fort Pierce Central High School graduate. "I'm blown away by the amount of work they do." Robinson wants to pursue a career in design and was interested in design departments at Pursuit Boats, California Closets, and A-1 Roof Trusses but said she was most drawn to Team IP because of the opportunity to grow.

Dashawn Johnson, 18, also from Fort Pierce Central, received a job offer from California Closets. He will start in the warehouse and plans to work his way up to becoming an installer after learning about some of the technical aspects of the job, such as how to read blueprints. He said he met "cool people" and enjoyed everything about boot camp. "I'd work at all those places if I could," Johnson said.

Jennifer Mitchell, director of human resources at A-1 Roof Trusses, said her company likes participating in the program because it helps them identify job candidates who are interested in building a career. "It helps us in weeding out those who are working because they want to versus those who are working

because they have to,” she said. A-1 Roof Trusses offered a production job to participant Matthew Endres during the boot camp’s Signing Day Job Fair.

Steeven Andrade, 18, a Lincoln Park Academy graduate, said the camp opened his eyes to opportunities he hadn’t known about before. His favorite part was the visit to Phoenix Metal Products where he was able to try his hand at welding. He is now interested in looking at the welding course offered by Indian River State College and at welding opportunities with several of the employers.

“Our No. 1 goal is to make sure our students will be successful in college or in a career,” said Aliesha Seitz, director of career and technical education for St. Lucie Public Schools (SLPS). The boot camps introduce students to careers they would not have known about otherwise and help them identify opportunities, she said.

SLPS Chief Academic Officer Helen Wild wants to continue and expand the Ready to Work Boot Camp program. Wild said she appreciates the partnership with local businesses and with the Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County (EDC), which coordinates and staffs the weeklong boot camp.

“Working with the students, businesses, and our school partners on these boot camps is a lot of fun, of course, but, most importantly, the program helps build the local talent pipeline for today’s in-demand careers,” said Jill Marasa, EDC vice president of business retention and expansion.

About the Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County

The EDC is a private, not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting economic vitality in St. Lucie County through the attraction, retention and expansion of businesses in the community. The EDC works in partnership with local governments and the private sector to advance its goals of creating more and better-paying jobs for residents, broadening the tax base and improving St. Lucie County’s economic quality of life. Contact the EDC at 772.336.6250 or www.youredc.com.

Note: Steeven is not a typo, he spells his name with a double e.

Boot camp photos on next page...



13 recent high school graduates completed the St. Lucie County Ready to Work Boot Camp June 11.
Photo by Maureen Saltzer



Dashawn Johnson, left, interviews with California Closets during the Ready to Work Boot Camp job fair.
Johnson will begin work with California Closets on June 28. *Photo by Maureen Saltzer*