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Specific job preparation the topic of new series

FIT?4 Career Series designed to help plan for industry work

By Marjorie Stromberg, Sentinel reporter, mstromberg@lewistownsentinel.com

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LEWISTOWN - The Lewistown CareerLink is offering a FIT 4 Career Series, designed to help participants plan and prepare for work in a specific industry, according to information by the Pennsylvania CareerLink and the Central Pennsylvania Workforce Development Corporation.

The two series being offered locally are FIT 4 Advanced Manufacturing and FIT 4 Building and Construction. The manufacturing series began on Feb. 26, and the building and construction series is scheduled to begin on April 15. Each series lasts six weeks, according to Lisa Hubler, business services representative at the CareerLink, and John Erceg, CareerLink program supervisor.

The manufacturing series is full, but space still is open for those interested in participating in the building and construction series, Hubler said.

The series is being offered through a grant by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, which the Central PA Workforce Development Corporation applied for, Erceg explained. The work force board covers nine counties in Central Pennsylvania, he said.

"(The) work force investment board (worked) with manufacturers to help develop the curriculum," he said about the program.

Much of the training for the building and construction series has been coordinated through the PA College of Technology and the Associated Builders & Contractors Inc., Hubler said.

"The training modules are based around the National Center for Construction Education and Research core curriculum that combines industry specific training such as blueprint reading and construction math," she said, such as how much dry wall it takes to complete a room.

Erceg added that the program is open to both people with no experience in the particular industry of interest as well as those with some experience to see if they can learn something new.

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During the first three weeks of the FIT 4 Series program, people come to workshops already established at the CareerLink "to make sure they're the right fit for the training program," Hubler said. Participants go through these workshops and earn something called a WorkKeys Career Readiness Certificate, Erceg said, which measures their ability in math, reading and locating information. Participants then get a score, he said, as well as different levels of certification.

During the second three-week period, participants work with Tooling U, a program that consists of online lessons that can be done at home, in the library or elsewhere, Hubler said.

"They have assignments given to them," Erceg added.

Participants earn credentials after every online lesson if they pass it, he said.

Also during this time, Erceg said, two industry tours are given. So far, Standard Steel has committed to the tour for the manufacturing series, but program organizers still are looking for another site to take participants.

At the end of the sessions, participants are invited to a networking event, Erceg said, which is not a job fair. He said he is hoping a lot of employers are able to attend. The networking event for the manufacturing series is April 9.

Erceg added that it's important to have employer endorsements as part of the program. The curriculum for the series is made for employers by employers, he said.

Hubler said the program is beneficial for both participants and employers. Participants will walk away with skills they need and some credentials, she said, and regarding employers, "It's a great tool for hiring purposes."

"(It) can reduce turnover for employers," Hubler said.

There are no set times or dates for sessions during the program, as sessions generally are individualized, depending on when each workshop is offered and which ones participants need to take, Hubler said.

There is a Tooling U orientation that will be held from 9 a.m. to noon on March 23 at the CareerLink, and hands-on training with the Pennsylvania College of Technology, that is scheduled from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on April 5, 6 and 7 at the CareerLink, Hubler said.

Orientation for the building and construction series will be on April 15 at the CareerLink, although a time has not been set yet, she said.

Both of the FIT 4 Series are valued at \$2,500 per person in training, Hubler said, and are offered at no cost to the participant or the employers.

One-hundred percent attendance is required for both series, she said.

"After completion of either of these series, a participant will have gained the in-demand, entry level skills needed to stand out from other job seekers and to succeed in the specific industry they chose. They will have a foundation to build on if they choose to advance in their particular field," Hubler said.

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According to information provided by the Pennsylvania CareerLink and the Central Pennsylvania Workforce Development Corporation, the FIT 4 Career Series will provide foundational industry training for individuals interested in obtaining entry-level employment in a specific industry, conducting career exploration and/or pursuing additional training opportunities, such as on-the-job training or post-secondary education.

Other programs within the series include FIT 4 Natural Gas, which is being offered in Lycoming and Clinton counties, and FIT 4 Health Care, which is being offered in Columbia/Montour, Northumberland and Centre counties.

For more information, call the Lewistown CareerLink at 248-4942 and ask to speak with Hubler or Erceg.

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Lewistown, PA 17044
717-248-6741

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