

OUC Teams Up with Workforce Academy

The Central Florida YMCA and Orlando Utilities Commission (OUC) continue to support Orange County Public Schools (OCPS) by partnering with Workforce Advantage Academy. Mina Ford introduced the YMCA Teen Achievers Program to the academy as a part of its public school outreach effort. Audrey Brown, CPS, ED.D of OUC spearheaded the effort to incorporate OUC's Career and Technical Education Cluster into Workforce Advantage Academy's strategy.



OUC launches WAA Cluster Program. Above: Al Frazier, OUC vice president
Right (from left to right): Audrey Brown, CPS, EdD, senior human resources consultant at OUC; Amanda Molina, YMCA; Corey Johnson, OUC water distribution accountability supervisor; Linda Howard, OUC director of fiscal services; Ebony Whitby, OUC collections analyst



Interested students can participate in activities that will contribute to their access to mentors, sponsors and other professional community partners. Networking with business and industry partners can develop relationships that foster the creation of economic opportunities.

"Listen, absorb and apply what you learn, and you will be good at what you do," advised Al Frazier, vice president of customer experience for Orlando Utilities Commission. "Then you're self-esteem rises, and you can do wonderful things. It's up to you to be the best you can be."

Frazier and fellow power and water utility employees outlined the employment and educational opportunities offered by the City-owned agency. They also shared their personal experiences, telling students about how they rose up the corporate ladder at OUC.

"No one holds you back but you," added Corey Johnson, who discussed how he began by digging ditches, then earned a bachelors degree paid for by the utility and now holds a supervisory position.

"The Orlando Utilities Commission/Workforce Advantage Academy/YMCA Career and Technical Education Cluster initiative will contribute to the self-sufficiency training and philosophy of Workforce Advantage Academy," Merrell said. "This experience can provide a significant benefit in knowledge gained, skills learned and abilities obtained for our students and community partners."



The Academy Times

Vol. X-II

Students Build Budgeting & Other Life Skills

Holding down a job, balancing a checkbook, managing a household—all part of life, and people of a certain age often think little about all of the tasks that make up a daily, weekly or monthly routine. But for young people, just starting out, budgeting, finances and making adult decisions can seem overwhelming. Workforce Advantage Academy aims to make the transition to life as an adult easier by giving students an opportunity to give life a risk-free trial.

During the first half of the year, students in Mercedes Farfan's Consumer Math class, randomly selected virtual jobs, real openings found in the newspaper classified ads; established a checking account in which to deposit their wages; searched the Internet for apartments, and when they had saved enough money for a deposit and first-month's rent, leased a unit, furnished it and stocked it with food, toilet paper, soap and other supplies.

"I have learned so much, such as not to spend what I don't have and cannot afford,"



Meaghan Hertel and Christopher Alicea vowed to "to share their finances and help each other obtain high grades, during a "marriage ceremony" in Consumer

said senior Joshua Austin, who recently rented an apartment in real life. "She made me realize about stuff you don't think about like security deposits, first and last month's rents, and leasing fees."

Austin, who works part time at Arby's, also reported discovering the importance of "saving for a rainy day," the costs associated with credit cards, and not to

buy luxury items priced beyond his budget.

"It was so cool to learn this in class before I was out on my own," Austin said.

Senior Briana Johnson still lives at home, but she is soaking up all of the learning opportunities offered in Consumer Math.

"Once I get my own apartment and have to budget, this will be very useful," Johnson said.

Farfan monitors the student's activities and will charge a fee for a bounced check, just as the bank would. If the student forgets to pay the rent for two months, Farfan issues an eviction notice, and the student must find another place

to live and give a larger deposit.

"It's a good experience for them," Farfan said. "I give them no reminders, but they can remind each other to pay the rent or buy groceries."

Throughout the year, they will virtually buy more groceries, a used car and other items they need. They can elect to "marry" and share expenses, but students quickly learn some of the drawbacks, including the expense of a divorce.

"They soon realize, it's cheaper to get married, but much more costly to get out of it," Farfan said.

This semester, students are learning how to cope with random life events, including being laid off; having babies, which add \$200 to the monthly expenses; and a chance at more education, so they can secure a higher-paying job.

In addition to the personal finance and management tasks, students will participate in a business simulation, working as teams to open a business, figure out the costs, price the product or service, market it, determine anticipated profit margins, and develop quality control procedures. Everything from transportation costs to inventory storage to paying for utilities, as well as documentation to support the plan, must be included in the team's proposal and PowerPoint presentation.

Sublette Chats with Workforce Students



Former state legislator and candidate for Orange County School Board Chair Bill Sublette met with students and shared his positions about education.

"We need better technical and workforce education," Sublette said. "We have a population of good kids who will be great, productive members of our society, and we're failing them by treating everyone the same."

Sublette expressed optimism about possibilities for improving the school system, so it helps all children develop their talents, whether academic, athletic or trade skills. He praised programs to end social

promotion and emphasized a need for all students to learn how to read and to develop the skills they will need in the future.

"Know yourself and figure out your talents," Sublette advised the students. "Then make the most of those talents and the blessings God has given you."

Do you have a news item for us or a story you would like us to share with others? If so, please email the idea to:
news@workforceadvantageacademy.com.

Workforce Advantage Academy will soon email supplementary news summaries to keep you informed between mailings. If you would like to receive them, please email us at:
news@workforceadvantageacademy.com.



Founders Corner

by **Kenneth E. Hartsaw Jr., Chief Executive Officer**

Greetings from Workforce Academy. We have many exciting events coming up for the remaining school year to include the New York City spring field trip, dances and, of course, FCAT testing. The seniors are preparing for life after high school and are working hard picking their new careers.

The following letter from one of our seniors displays our hope for the students. This young lady was part of a group that played host to our foreign exchange student at my house.

Mr. H,

First, let me start by saying thank you. Thank you for having the vision of a school like Workforce. It has let me gain experience and knowledge like no other.

You have given me the opportunity to see and go

places I've never seen or been to. You even gave me the privilege to enter you and your wife's home and break bread, and that is something I will never forget.

The New Year is coming up, and I may not have much to offer. But I will wear the title of a Workforce Advantage Academy student proudly, and be the most industrious graduate in WAA history.

This is one of the many good stories from our students that understand our mission, success and confidence.



Where Are They Now?

Workforce Academy alumni are pursuing their dreams and following their passions.

Ed Valentin: On the path to a successful career

Graduation day May 2009 marked the start of Ed Valentin's adult life. In the months since completing his studies, Valentin married, became a father of a little girl and joined the Army. He completed basic training at Fort Sill in Oklahoma and advanced individual training to become a food inspection specialist at Fort Sam Houston in Texas. He graduated second highest in the class and earned the right to select his home base.

Valentin will be stationed at Fort Story in Virginia Beach, Va., where he will inspect food stored and served at the base to ensure it meets military standards.

"I want to make a career of this and work for the U.S. Department of Agriculture and start earning



\$70,000 a year," Valentin said.

That goal will have to wait, since Valentin plans to spend 20 years in the service, earn a bachelor's degree in nutritional science, retire at age 37 and then start his second career.

When Valentin transferred to Workforce Academy from Colonial High, he had no idea what he wanted to do. But earning money so he could do things intrigued him. An internship in the graphic arts department at ABC Fine Wine and Spirits, making signs for area stores, provided a strong foundation and the understanding that working hard toward your goals leads to good outcomes.

"Workforce Academy was a great opportunity for me," Valentin said, "and it opened a lot of doors."

Patrick Gill-Flying High

Patrick Gill knew wanted more from life than the daily grind and followed the family tradition of service to our country, enlisting in the Air Force. Gill began an assignment as an air transportation specialist in Japan, during which he will load cargo planes with military equipment. After that, he hopes to deploy to Iraq.

"I want to see the world," Gill said. "I didn't want to be someone who stays here and does nothing exciting all day."



Carl Merrell (left) and Ken Hartsaw (right) encouraged Patrick Gill to pursue his dreams and full potential.

While attending Boone High, Gill felt he needed a change, and the opportunity to work while attending Workforce Academy appealed to

him. He interned at Repair Resources, fixing cell phones.

"It was fun," Gill said. "I learned in high school that it's not just a place to hang out with your friends, because once it ends, it's real life."

Gill plans to stay in the Air Force for 20 years, before retiring.

Attend Workforce Advantage Academy

The school continues accepting new juniors and seniors throughout the year. If you are a student seeking a supportive environment or know of a student who could benefit from small classrooms and personal attention, call us at 407-898-7228.

From Front Office to Med Tech

Workforce Academy senior Adriana Torres began working at Obstetric & Gynecology Specialists of Central Florida when school started this fall. She began by answering the telephone, making appointments, pulling charts, verifying insurance and entering information into the practice's computer system.

"Every day, there is something new to learn,"

Torres said. "It's a great opportunity and I'm getting out of my comfort spot."

Torres caught on so quickly and showed such interest in learning more, Wanda O'Neill, the practice administrator, has begun teaching her medical assistant skills, such as performing pregnancy tests.

"Adriana is very outgoing and wants to learn more," O'Neill said. "I know how hard it is for kids without experience, so I try to help them get knowledge and experience in the workforce."

Torres applied for the job, knowing she had an interest in the medical field.

The experience at Obstetric &

Gynecology Specialists has allowed her to observe nurses interacting with patients and convinced her to pursue a nursing degree.

"This opportunity has motivated me," said Torres, who plans to apply for scholarships that will help her finance her dream. "I just love my job."



Although the busy three-physician practice did not have an immediate need for additional clerical support, O'Neill liked the Workforce Academy model and wanted to participate.

"I love the program, because I love helping kids," O'Neill said. "We must do things like this for the future. If we all do something for the kids, it will be a better world."

Workforce Advantage Academy

Our Mission

Our mission at Workforce Advantage Academy is to create learning environments for high school students, particularly those rising juniors and seniors who desire a different approach to reach their potential. Through attendance at Workforce Academy, our students develop the academic, employment and social skills they need to build rewarding lives and promote positive change in their communities.

Workforce Academy believes that genuine self-esteem comes from academic accomplishments that are recognized and celebrated along with personal fulfillment through strides of independence – being employed, productive citizens.

Our Administrative Team

Kenneth E. Hartsaw, Jr.
Belinda B. Jones
W. Carl Merrell

Chief Executive Officer
President/Principal
Chief Operating Officer

Contact us at: 407-898-7228

Workforce Advantage Academy admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school administered programs.

Meet Board Chair Elizabeth Hughes

Passionate about creating opportunities for youth to thrive and prosper, Orlando native and Workforce Advantage Academy Board Chair Elizabeth Hughes has served on the school's board of directors since its inception in 2003.

"I've met young men and women who are up against situations that many people would find difficult to overcome," Hughes said. "But they come to this school and are surrounded by staff and faculty who support them, and they flourish."

A full-time volunteer and former professional fund-raiser, Hughes is familiar with community programs and the challenges so many Central Floridians deal with on a daily basis. She said she finds volunteering with Workforce Academy one of her most gratifying experiences.

"There's an immediate return on investment," said Hughes, citing the personal stories she has encountered—a young man now at Columbia University, others who have landed good jobs and are well on their way to successful lives.

"I see the progress these young people are making, because someone took the time to give them a hand up," Hughes said. "They are grateful to have found a safe haven, a solid education, food in their bellies and field trips. Our students seize the opportunities Workforce Academy offers. Working with the school has been a true highlight of my life."

