



[June 27, 2008]

Job-training programs intrigue companies

(Herald & Review (Decatur, IL) (KRT) Via Acquire Media NewsEdge) Jun. 27--DECATUR -- Caterpillar Inc., Tate & Lyle, Decatur Memorial and St. Mary's hospitals are companies that may follow Archer Daniels Midland Co.'s lead in developing work force readiness training programs.

Michael Diggs, director of career services at Richland Community College, said 12 of the 20 women who completed 11 weeks of training two months ago designed to prepare them for clerical positions at ADM have found jobs, five still are seeking employment and the other three will continue their education.

"A lot of companies have shown interest," he said, "and we try to assist them."

Diggs was among speakers Thursday at Richland, updating two groups on what is being done locally and state-wide to prepare people for the work force.

One group was the Decatur Area Education Coalition's Young Workers and Scholars Team, which is devising strategies to ensure every high school student in Macon County graduates with the skills to succeed. The other was the Decatur Jobs Council, a coalition of social service agencies trying to remove barriers to employment for disadvantaged people.

Diggs said a major reason for the success of the ADM training was that each trainee had a mentor. Workforce Investment Solutions was another partner in the project.

Theresa Churchill can be reached at tchurchill@herald-review.com or 421-7978.

Indeed, a call for mentors for a new welding training program came later in the meeting from Missy Batman, finance director for the Community Foundation of Decatur/Macon County, who said ADM is helping create a job description for mentors.

The foundation received a \$50,000 state grant to train 20 disadvantaged people as welders and coach them through their first nine months of employment. "Often people make it through their first 90 days but around the five-month mark, they drop off," she said.

Batman also said more than 85 people signed up to begin eight weeks of assessment leading up to the start of first round of the 10-week training. Union Iron Works and Barton Manufacturing are the employers involved.

Speakers also included administrators with the Decatur School District and Robert Wordlaw, executive director of the Chicago Jobs Council.

Should Chicago be named host of the 2016 Summer Olympics, that and the green movement will strongly affect employment throughout Illinois, Wordlaw said.

Theresa Churchill can be reached at tchurchill@herald-review.com or 421-7978.

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