

Benson, state education leaders sign pact to provide training for Tinker Air Force Base

Oklahoma's system of Career and Technology Education is beefing up existing programs and services, and adding new ones, to meet a predicted shortage of workers caused by upcoming skilled worker retirements at Tinker Air Force Base, according to state CareerTech Director Dr. Ann Benson.

"We're pleased to be one of the key players in the Tinker Education Partnership Agreement that will help solve this labor shortage," Benson said. "As Oklahoma's largest single-site employer, Tinker is incredibly important to Oklahoma's economic future."

The partnership agreement was formally signed at the State Capitol in August by Maj. Gen. Charles Johnson II, Tinker's commander; Robert Conner, executive director of Tinker's Air Logistics Center, and Gov. Frank Keating. Also signing were the leaders of Oklahoma's three educational systems: Sandy Garrett, state superintendent of public instruction; Dr. Hans Brisch, chancellor of the State Regents for Higher Education, and Benson.

Benson said Tinker estimates that 1,100 new employees will be needed at the base in the next two fiscal years alone. Of those, about 800, or 73 percent, will be in the trades and crafts area.

Areas where vacancies are expected include aircraft electrician, machinist, sheet metal me-



Gov. Frank Keating (seated) signs an agreement to provide education and training for Tinker Air Force Base. The agreement was also signed by Dr. Ann Benson, state CareerTech director; Sandy Garrett, state superintendent of public instruction; Dr. Hans Brisch, chancellor of the State Regents for Higher Education; Maj. Gen. Charles Johnson II, Tinker's commander, and Robert Conner, executive director of Tinker's Air Logistics Center.

chanic, pneudraulic system mechanic, aircraft engine mechanic, and aircraft mechanic.

"All of these skills are taught in existing Airframe and Power Plant (A&P) courses offered at several Oklahoma technology centers," Benson said.

Three technology centers in the Oklahoma City metropolitan area — Metro Tech in Oklahoma City, Canadian Valley in El Reno and Gordon Cooper in Shawnee — already offer aviation airframe and power plant courses.

"Our tech centers have already begun the process of restructuring

their existing A&P courses to meet Tinker Air Force Base specifications," said Bruce DeMuth, associate state director at the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education. DeMuth has been coordinating the CareerTech system's response to the Tinker workforce shortfall.

DeMuth said A&P courses in Oklahoma's technology centers have traditionally been 18 months in length because of the required 1,980 hours of instruction to achieve national certification as an A&P mechanic.

New school year brings new name for OVA

The Oklahoma Vocational Association (OVA) is starting the new school year with a new name.

The professional organization for more than 3,600 career and technology educators has changed its name to the Oklahoma Association for Career and Technology Education (OkACTE).

The association, organized in 1929, currently provides a variety of services to its statewide membership. Among them are representation at the State Capitol and in Washington, D.C. (through collaboration with the Association for Career and Technical Education), professional development seminars and a variety of other benefits.

Charlotte Edwards, OkACTE executive director, said the new name brings the association in line

should have a more modern name that better reflects the changes that's occurred in our programs," she said.

"After the national association, ACTE (formerly known as the American Vocational Association), changed, the OVA Executive Committee proposed the new name to the membership." Edwards said the name change

process took two years.

It involved a blue ribbon task force that studied the issue and proposed a strategy, a survey of the organization's members, focus groups and a final vote to approve the new name.

"The association's new name better reflects our service to the career and technology education system," Edwards said.



with the Oklahoma career and technology education system, which changed its name in 2000.

It also aligns with the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE), the national organization for *CareerTech* educators.

"For a number of years, business and industry has been telling us that vocational education

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Message from the editor

Dear *Expressions* Readers,

As you can see, we are making a few changes to the way *Expressions* is produced.

Expressions will now be produced once every month to enable us to keep you more informed about the latest happenings in the *CareerTech* system.

You'll have the opportunity to receive *Expressions* via e-mail. The electronic format will be a Portable Document File (PDF). This development saves the Oklahoma

Department of Career and Technology Education (and taxpayers) money and allows *Expressions* to get to our readers more quickly.

If you would like to receive *Expressions* via e-mail, please send your e-mail address to motik@okcareertech.org or you can call (405) 743-5109. Thanks for your cooperation.

Manny Otiko, editor

GirlTech program aims to increase number of women in IT and engineering fields

Ask a young boy what he wants to do when he grows up and you might hear answers like astronaut, engineer and computer technician. These are careers that pay well and have lots of opportunity, but they are fields that few females are choosing.

GirlTech, a program being sponsored by the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education, is hoping to change that mindset.

"*GirlTech* is a mentoring pilot project designed to help female students succeed in nontraditional career paths," said Kelly Arrington, guidance coordinator at the state *CareerTech* agency and

GirlTech coordinator. "We are focusing on the information technology (IT) and scientific research/engineering professions."

Arrington said high-tech fields such as information technology have huge growth potential and pay good salaries. However, female students tend to be poorly represented in these professions.

"Women make up only 20 percent of the IT profession and less than that figure in science and engineering," she said.

She added that often female students avoid these professions because they may be intimidated by the subject matter or don't

realize the opportunities that are available.

GirlTech focuses on matching female students with mentors who work in these professions. "Research shows that role models and mentors are an essential element of helping female students be successful," Arrington said.

Two schools have been selected to be test sites for *GirlTech*. They are Meridian Technology Center in Stillwater and Francis Tuttle in Oklahoma City. Arrington said mentors at these schools have been matched up with 45 students. Students and mentors in the program are recruited by site coordinators at each school.

Cheryl Maye, a computer training specialist at Meridian Technology Center, is a mentor in the *GirlTech* program. Maye, who has been teaching computer classes for 10 years, is enthusiastic about *GirlTech* and said she would have benefited from this kind of program when she was a student.

"Since there are few females in the IT field, there are fewer people to provide encouragement," she said. "*GirlTech* is a wonderful opportunity to build upon that base."

Maye will meet with her student on a regular basis, both in person and via e-mail. She said mentors are valuable resources for students because they understand what it takes to succeed in the industry and can steer young people in the right direction.



Pictured from left are Robin Drury, ODCTE, and Kaylea Kukuk, a student at Meridian Technology Center. Drury is Kukuk's mentor in GirlTech, a program which is trying to increase the number of females in information technology, science and engineering.

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Technology centers receive \$1.7 million equipment donation from WorldCom

Several technology centers are benefiting from the generosity of WorldCom who recently donated about \$1.7 million worth of equipment to *CareerTech* telecommunications programs.

Schools that will receive the equipment are Central Technology Center, Drumright; Canadian Valley Technology Center; Chisholm Trail Technology Center, Omega; Indian Capital Technology Center, Muskogee; Great Plains Technology Center, Lawton; Wes Watkins Technology Center, Wetumka; Caddo-Kiowa Technology Center, Fort Cobb; Gordon Cooper Technology Center, Shawnee; Moore Norman Technology Center; Tri-County Technology Center, Bartlesville; Tulsa Technology Center; Northeast Technology Center, Pryor; Carl Albert State College and Eastern Oklahoma State College.

Chrisanna Paxton, corporate technical trainer and educational liaison trainer at WorldCom, said the telecommunications hardware includes racks, digital equipment, routers and testing equipment.

Not only will this donation allow students access to the latest telecommunication tools, it also saves technology centers money.

"Most of the technology centers could not have afforded the equipment if they had to buy it on their own," Paxton said.

Dr. Sheryl Hale, state coordinator for Adult and Career Development at the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education, said WorldCom often partners with the Oklahoma *CareerTech* system to support telecommunications training programs by providing instructor development opportunities, equipment support and industry perspectives.

"There is still a shortage of information technology and telecommunications workers," she said. "*CareerTech* programs are designed to help create a pipeline to support the telecommunications industry in Oklahoma."

Apart from supplying new workers for the industry, technology centers can also provide facilities for retraining workers in new equipment and technology, Hale said. This is one of the reasons why the donated equipment is so important.

"This donation of state-of-the-art equipment aligns the programs with the equipment utilized in business and industry," Hale said.

"Our students have the opportunity to train on equipment they will use in the workplace."