

Ready to Work

BY CARISSA FRASCA CUTRELL

Wanted: a workforce that's proficient in reading, writing and arithmetic and has a positive attitude, the ability to solve problems, a strong work ethic, professionalism and effective communication skills.

It's hard to find young people that already understand these skills," says Indian Lakes resident Amy Wisilosky, 36, vice president of marketing for Virginia Beach Schools Federal Credit Union.

To answer the demand from the business community, Virginia Beach City Public Schools developed the Workplace Readiness Skills Curriculum, in partnership with Opportunity Inc. and the South and Western Hampton Roads' Workforce Development Board.

The curriculum focuses on 13 key skill areas that range from reading and writing to listening and working with others. At the end of the year, students take an exam that assesses their competence level in each area. Last spring, more than 1,743 students took the Workplace Readiness Skills test and 79 percent passed.

"You always want to get local talent, and the quality of students from this program is astronomical. If you can hire a Virginia Beach grad, you know that you're going to be happy," says Wisilosky.

When interviewing for a position with Angelo's by the Sea, Stephen Patrick, 18, a Westview resident and Kempsville High School graduate, showed his interviewer the requirements for passing the Workplace Readiness Skills test.

These skills "definitely helped me get a job and be better prepared for a job," says Patrick. As a runner, he was responsible for making sure supplies for weddings or conventions were in place and ready for guests. In addition, "The program helped me with people skills – not just with the people I worked for, but also the people I worked with," says Patrick.

And that's why he became a leader on the Angelo's team. "He commanded respect," says Alexandria resident Eric Budowsky, 52, former manager at Angelo's by the Sea and current catering director at Old Dominion University. "His whole demeanor was great."

Victoria Jackson, 18, a Landstown High School graduate and Kempsville resident, had a similar experience. "My teacher mentioned that there was a position available at



PHOTO BY CRAIG MCCLURE

Victoria Jackson

Virginia Beach Schools Federal Credit Union,” she says. “I went in and interviewed and I had the job on the spot.”

Today, Jackson is the first person you meet when you enter the credit union. She answers phones, greets customers, runs errands and fills in wherever she can assist.

“She’s absolutely fabulous!” Wisilosky says.

Jackson began courses at Old Dominion University this fall and continues to work at the credit union twice a week. After graduation, she hopes to become a marketing education teacher.

After working at Angelo’s by the Sea for a year and half, Patrick traded his running shoes for classes at



PHOTO BY CRAIG MCCLURE

Stephen Patrick

Tidewater Community College. He plans to continue at a four-year university and become an information technology professional. He credits the Workplace Readiness Skills initiative with helping prepare him for his new endeavors.

To find out more about the Workplace Readiness Skills Curriculum, visit www.vbschools.com/TCE/workplace.asp, a site designed by Patrick and other students from the VBCPS Technical and Career Education Program, call 648-6180, or listen to a podcast at www.yesvirginiabeach.com.

“You always want to get local talent, and the quality of students from this program is astronomical. If you can hire a Virginia Beach grad, you know that you’re going to be happy” —Amy Wisilosky