

## **Campus Bans Together with Community Organizations to Train Displaced Homemakers to Become Machinists**

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Thirteen women in Olean, New York, who are struggling to care for their families while making minimum wage will soon be ready for employment as machinists. Due to the efforts of four community organizations, including the Cattaraugus County Campus of Jamestown Community College (JCC), these displaced homemakers will have the opportunity to enter into nontraditional roles and make an adequate living for themselves and their families.

When Jesse Gugino, director of Continuing Education at the Cattaraugus County Campus of JCC, met with Mary Snodgrass, executive director of Everywoman Opportunity Center (a nonprofit organization that helps women move toward personal and economic self-sufficiency), they cooked up a grant proposal for displaced homemakers that had a formula for success. "First we had to find a field of nontraditional employment for women where they could be gainfully employed and self-sufficient," said Mr. Gugino. The field of machining was chosen because of the number of industries in the area that employ machinists and the fact that it is a very high paying field. "Many of these women worked as sales clerks or health aides, making minimum wage, but you can't support a family on that," said Ms. Snodgrass. "In machining, you have a future, you can move up. With five years experience, you can make 13 to 15 dollars an hour."

Joining Jamestown Community College and Everywoman Opportunity Center in meeting the objectives of the state education department, were the Cattaraugus County Employment Training Program and the Olean BOCES Center. "We needed Everywoman Opportunity Center for support services, the Cattaraugus County Campus of JCC for upgrading math and reading skills, BOCES for the machining skill, and Cattaraugus County Employment and Training for screening and testing," noted Ms. Snodgrass.

In October of 1992, the four organizations were awarded \$70,000 to complete the project. Ms. Snodgrass took the first step, which was recruiting the women. "The proposal was for 15 women. Thirty-five called, twenty-two were interviewed, and thirteen were selected," said Ms. Snodgrass. The screening process had many stipulations such as marital status, low

income, and need of support. "We were dealing with women who were basically on welfare," Ms. Snodgrass added. Their ages range from 24 to 49 and all but one are mothers; some are single parents. "Until now, I've done retail work," said Susanne Bacho of Olean, New York, a student in the program. "I'm just hoping to get a job where I can make more money than in sales." Another student in the program, Norma Wanderweg of Franklinville, New York noted, "I'm going from high heels to work boots." She was in retail sales as well.

The Everywoman Opportunity Center began the process with support courses such as assertiveness training, building self-confidence, risk taking, teamwork, leadership, and general life skills. Then the women headed to the Cattaraugus County Campus of JCC to upgrade their math and reading skills.

"I sensed a little apprehension. They were curious about learning the math, though. Some never learned it when they were younger and some who learned it, had forgotten it," commented Laura Kwiatkowski, a math and reading instructor at JCC. According to Ms. Kwiatkowski, the women were searching for more in the math—they wanted to develop further. By the end of the math session, the women were ready to move on. "They couldn't wait to get their hands on the machines," noted Ms. Kwiatkowski. Ms. Kwiatkowski noted a difference in these students from those she taught before. "I teach men in industry. The big difference was that these women were all there to help each other and were not afraid to ask questions. I could tell good friendships were being developed," added Ms. Kwiatkowski.

After the 70 hours of math and reading skill upgrade at the Cattaraugus County Campus of JCC, the women moved to BOCES for actual machine training. "The women were well prepared," noted Lloyd Deyoe, a BOCES instructor. "When they were told to pick up a micrometer, they knew what it was." Currently the women are completing their 500 hours of machining training at BOCES. Keith Kameck, another BOCES instructor commented, "You can see their confidence increase every day. They are not afraid to take hold of their machines." Machining student Norma Wanderweg noted, "My kids know I'm going to school, but they don't understand about different kinds of work. But they do understand there will be more money, someday."

According to the two instructors, the program is providing basic machine shop skill training. The concept is to combine the advantages of both instructional methods, allowing trainees to develop the manipulative skills at an individual pace. There are also opportunities to acquire basic knowledge and technical

skills using precision measuring instruments, drilling machines, grinders, lathes, layout tools, milling machines, and reading and understanding engineering drawings.

In May of 1993, the women were awarded their machining certificates from BOCES. The total program concluded at the end of June. The last component, according to Ms. Snodgrass, was to help them find jobs. "There are thirty-five industries in this area that hire machinists," said Ms. Snodgrass. All of the organizations involved were looking at the long-range effect of the experience. "These women want to support their families and will be able to work for it. They have a lot of hard lessons to learn, but at least they are going in well prepared," said Ms. Snodgrass.

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