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New program will connect skilled labor with Burleson industry

Burleson Works provides an opportunity for students and citizens in the community to gain technical skills that will benefit local companies

Mayor Ken Shetter announced today the launch of Burleson Works, a program of the Burleson Opportunity Fund and the Burleson Economic Development Corporation. This new program aims to fill the skills gap in Burleson's labor market through partnerships with local and regional schools.

"Expanding higher education opportunities for Burleson residents has been a top priority for the City Council over the past decade," said Mayor Ken Shetter. "Having awarded more than 900 scholarships, the Burleson Opportunity Fund has been great for families and has been an important component of our very successful economic development program. Development of the Burleson Works program as an extension of the Burleson Opportunity Fund is the logical next step."

The pilot program will pair Burleson residents with local companies that have positions to fill and then provide the resident with the technical training needed to step into that role.

"Partnering with the City and local colleges for the Burleson Works program will help to create a stronger talent pool within the Burleson area that we can employ," said Daniel C. DeJarnette, F-Wave vice president of operations. "We are a startup business with aggressive growth plans within the City of Burleson and it cannot be achieved without the right individuals on our team to push it forward."

BASICS OF THE PROGRAM

Burleson Works will focus training in technical fields such as welding, engineering, machinery, software development, industrial maintenance, automotive and more. Each year, Burleson Works industrial partners will be surveyed to determine what positions will be vacant in the upcoming 12-to-24 months. Scholarships will be provided to applicants based on the specific needs of the partners. Local companies will have an opportunity to interview the applicants before the scholarship is awarded. If selected, the applicant will begin training through one of the program's educational partners. Educational partners include Hill College, Tarrant County College, Texas State Technical College and University of Texas at Arlington. Once the courses are complete, the scholarship recipient will know exactly where they will be employed, at a company right here in Burleson.

“The Burleson Works program is essential to the continued growth and success of KWS Manufacturing Co.,” said KWS Manufacturing President, Bill Mecke. “Skilled labor is in high demand and KWS depends on the local Burleson workforce to be successful. Our partnership with the City of Burleson will provide high-paying and challenging jobs with opportunities for advancement.”

The program is open to anyone who lives within the city limits of Burleson. Starting Jan. 1, 2018, interested participants can complete an application at www.burlesonworks.com. All documents are due by March 15 with interviews taking place sometime between March 15 and April 30. Recipients of the scholarship will be notified no later than May 15.

PROGRAM NEED

As the Burleson Economic Development team works to attract new industry and to retain the community’s already vibrant industrial base the need for a skilled workforce is increasing. According to Emsi, an economic development modeling software, Johnson County, alone, is anticipating to grow the need for technical workers by 24% in the next ten years. And currently, 25% of the current workforce is over the age of 55, says Emsi, which means retirement is looming for a quarter of employees.

“With the DFW market being a desirable place for companies to call home it is extremely important for us to come together as a community and have a one-of-a-kind program that cultivates our talent in-house before it has an opportunity to leave,” said Alex Philips, City of Burleson economic development manager. “We have some amazing companies that call Burleson home. They offer great career opportunities and we are working to make sure they are filled with Burleson talent.”

PROGRAM PARTNERS

“I am particularly pleased that this new program involves a strong partnership with Burleson employers, ensuring even more families will have opportunities to thrive and that Burleson's workforce can fuel the prosperity of dynamic businesses,” said Mayor Shetter. “Burleson Works is one more thing that makes Burleson a great place to live, learn, work and play.”

Currently, the program will partner with the following leaders in the community.

- Chicken Express Distribution Center
- AirForce Airguns manufacturer
- LKQ Corporation
- Wagner-Smith Equipment Company
- F-Wave
- KWS Manufacturing
- Dunaway Associates
- Campbell's Auto Body
- Thomas Conveyor, Inc.
- Hayes & Stolz Industrial Manufacturing Company

- Basden Steel Corporation
- RenWeb
- United Cooperative Services
- Hill College
- Texas State Technical College
- Tarrant County College
- University of Texas at Arlington
- Burleson ISD
- Burleson Chamber of Commerce
- Texas Workforce Solutions

PROGRAM FUNDING

Burleson Works is a program of the Burleson Opportunity Fund, which is a non-profit organization that provides scholarship opportunities for all high school graduates who live or attend school in Burleson. The Burleson Works scholarship is privately funded through the program's industry partners as well as the Burleson Economic Development Corporation.

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