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Kentucky News**Warren County Certified as a Work Ready Community**

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BOWLING GREEN, KY--Warren County is now a Work Ready Community, according to the Kentucky Workforce Investment Board (KWIB), which awarded this certification during its KWIB meeting today. Warren County is one of the first counties in Kentucky to receive this designation, which demonstrates that Warren County has workforce capacity to staff existing jobs and to master the innovative technologies that new jobs will require in the future.

"We are excited that Warren County has achieved Work Ready Community status and we look forward to certifying many others in the future. Work Ready status is not an easy accomplishment. Warren County leaders are to be commended for working together to achieve this goal," said Crystal Gibson, chair of the Kentucky Work Ready Communities Review Panel and vice president of Communications and Public Affairs at Citigroup.

Work Ready Communities must meet established criteria in six specific areas:

- High school graduation rate
- National Career Readiness Certificate Holders
- Demonstrated community commitment
- Educational attainment
- Soft skills development
- Digital literacy

"We are honored to be one of the first communities in Kentucky to be named Work Ready," said Warren County Judge Executive Michael Buchanan. "Our community already exceeded the majority of these criteria, and our strong community partnerships are committed to continuing our work to develop an excellent workforce here."

City of Bowling Green Mayor Bruce Wilkerson said, "Being a Work Ready Community is yet another accolade that attests to the quality of our labor force and the strength of our educational institutions. I'm always proud to tell people about our exceptional community, the assets of which are heightened by this designation."



The Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce coordinated the community's application process, but the Work Ready certification would not have been possible without the years of combined efforts by these leading organizations in Bowling Green/Warren County. These organizations are

- Access Kentucky
- AT&T
- Barren River Workforce Investment Board
- Bluegrass Cellular

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- Warren County
- Warren County Public Schools
- Western Kentucky University

Ron Bunch, CECD, president and CEO of the Chamber and the Bowling Green Area Economic Development Authority, said, "We are extremely fortunate to have an outstanding partnership between the organizations that are leading us in obtaining Work Ready certification in Warren County. Our education attainment rates, our available training resources, and our infrastructure are what have made this certification possible. I continue to be impressed with the level of cooperation and willingness to contribute that our public and private organizations demonstrate here. These stakeholders are key to building and sustaining an effective workforce in Warren County and South Central Kentucky."

Warren County's high school graduation rate-88.57%-well exceeds the threshold criteria of 82.32%. This high graduation rate is indicative of the success and strength of the City and County school districts, from their national rankings to their multiple career and technical education courses.

As well, the county's post-secondary institutions directly influence the educational attainment of the workforce. Currently, 42.33% of Warren County residents have at least a two-year degree, in comparison to the 39% threshold established by the Kentucky WIB. This community's level of educational attainment continues to be above national figures, representing the positive impact of post-secondary institutions in Warren County:

- 18.2% of the Bowling Green population (ages 25 and older) have a bachelor's degree, compared to 17.7% of the U.S. population
- 11.2% of the Bowling Green population (ages 25 and older) have a graduate or professional degree, compared to 10.4% of the U.S. population

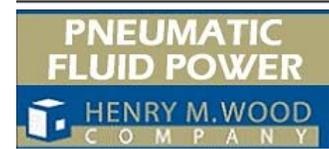
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Programs such as the Warren County Industrial Training Consortium (WCITC) and the Chamber's Work Ethic Seal Program are also integral to the community's Work Ready certification. The WCITC--a partnership between leaders of the county's existing businesses, Bowling Green Technical College, the Chamber and Western Kentucky University--provides low-cost technical- and soft-skills training opportunities for existing employees and coordinates the Supervisor Certificate Program. The Work Ethic Seal, a partnership between the Chamber, the City and County school districts, and Junior Achievement of South Central KY, promotes soft skills development for high school students preparing to enter the workforce.

Additionally, Warren County well surpasses the threshold that requires that 90% of an urban county must have 3Mbps of broadband internet access. Warren County's percentage is 97.8%. Internet access in Warren County is supported by Access



Kentucky, AT&T, Bowling Green Municipal Utilities and Insight Communications, as well as Bluegrass Cellular and FastNet Wireless.

While Warren County's percentage of National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) holders is currently less than one percent, the Work Ready Committee has identified an aggressive business plan to increase this percentage. Currently only 16 out of 120 Kentucky counties have NCRC attainment percentages above five percent. With the available resources from the Bowling Green Technical College Adult Learning Center, Kentucky Adult Education and the Kentucky Community and Technical College System, as well as the Kentucky Office of Employment & Training, individuals have ready access to NCRC training and testing facilities.

As the Chamber promotes the value of the NCRC credential to existing businesses and acts as the voice of the private sector, these public resources will be utilized at their full capacities. With this public-private collaboration, the Work Ready Committee has built a five-year business plan to reach more than 11,350 NCRC holders.

The Kentucky WIB is using the NCRC business plan developed by the local Work Ready Committee as a best-practice example of a business plan to increase the number of NCRC holders in a community. The Work Ready Community status will last for two years, at which time Warren County must be recertified.

For more information about the Work Ready Communities Program, visit <http://kwib.ky.gov/workreadycommunity.htm>.

About the Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce:

Incorporated in 1935, the Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce is a 5-Star Accredited Chamber by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and was named the 2009 Chamber of the Year by the American Chamber of Commerce Executives. As the fourth largest chamber in Kentucky, the Chamber serves as a premier business advocate for its more than 1,300 partners and is the driving force for economic development in South Central Kentucky. Its primary goals are to promote growth and success in the business community, reaching its small business partners and those in large industries alike. With leadership programs, governmental relations projects, educational initiatives and involvement opportunities, the Chamber aims to support the community and its neighbors in order to enhance the business climate and continue to grow the region.

Visit www.bgchamber.com to learn more about the Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce.



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