

Work Ready Designation a Slow but Vital Process

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WEBSTER COUNTY, Ky. (4/24/13) - As Webster County and Northwest Kentucky Forward (NWKF) slowly advance in the process of making Webster County a Work Ready Community "In Progress", one of the first steps is educating the residents.

By now most people have heard the phrase "work ready community" throw around, but what is a work ready community?

"It means the county's work force has attained a level of education and skills that make it attractive to current and future employers by having enough workers to meet their needs," said Mickey Dunbar, chairman of the Webster County Work Ready Community's Community Involvement Committee. "The designation itself is given out by the Kentucky Workforce Investment Board."

To be designated work ready, the county needs to meet certain criteria. The most important are graduation rate, National Career Readiness Certification (NCRC), community involvement, college education level and soft skills development.



"The county must maintain a high school graduation rate of 82.32 percent," Dunbar said. "Currently we are at 89 percent."

In the first three years the county must get nine percent of its working age population (age 18-64) to take the NCRC.

The NCRC is a portable credential that demonstrates achievement and estimates a level of workplace employability skills in Applied Mathematics, and Locating Information, and Reading for Information. It is administered by ACT through its WorkKeys Program, which is already required by many businesses as a part of the pre-employment screening process.

Even Armstrong Coal Company has used a personalized form of the WorkKeys.

"We also need to have 25 percent of that working age population to hold a two year degree, and present a plan to raise that number to 32 percent within three years," Dunbar explained.

The soft skills area is made up of skills such as work ethic, attitude, time management and others which are highly sought after skills by employers.

"This is not a one shot deal," Dunbar said. "It will continue to go on, but it is vital for our county to pursue this."

Officials with Webster County Work Ready and NWKF are working to spread the word and develop new opportunities for Webster County residents. This year NCRC testing will be given out to all seniors at Webster County High School. Testing is already available through Madisonville Community and Technical College.

Currently there are five certified Work Ready Communities in Kentucky, and eight Work Ready Communities "In Progress."

Henderson County to our north has achieved Work Ready status, with neighboring Union and Hopkins Counties already being designated "In Progress."

The next Work Ready meeting for Webster County is June 4, 2013.

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