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New training program tailored to EB work holds first graduation

14 fulfill requirements of 150-hour, five-week class; hundreds express interest

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Groton — Jason Barnwell, 29, is one step closer to starting a career building Navy submarines like his father.

Barnwell intended to follow in his father's footsteps, and he spent much of the last five weeks learning the same skills his father did when he first started building submarines.

Barnwell is one of 14 graduates of a five-week training program intended to produce the skilled workers that the region's advanced manufacturing sector, namely Electric Boat, needs.

A brief, informal ceremony was held for the class on Friday in the automotive lab at Ella T. Grasso Technical High School, where they've spent 150 hours.

In 2030, EB expects to have 18,000 employees turning out both advanced nuclear attack submarines and a new class of ballistic missile submarines.

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Graduates of class extended conditional offers from EB

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More than 90 percent of that growth will be in the shipyard trades, such as welding, pipefitting and sheet metal work.

The company has looked for partners to train the workers — such as the 14 who graduated Friday — that it needs to meet its workforce demands.

The class was the first to graduate from the program, called the Outside Machinists Manufacturing Pipeline, a collaboration between several organizations and EB.

The company has extended conditional employment offers to all of the graduates.

The program features classwork, an online component and hands-on training.

The 14 who pioneered the program come from different backgrounds and skills.

Monica Bonner, 29, has driven trucks and school buses. She's worked in home health care, retail and as a receptionist.

She said she was attracted to the manufacturing field because it's steady work with good pay. It's a challenge, and she gets to work with her hands.

While some people might not assume so, she said, it's work that involves "a lot of critical thinking."



DANA JENSEN/THE DAY
Monica Bonner, right, of New London receives a Certificate of Congressional Recognition from Avanti Grant, left, district director for U.S. Rep. Joe Courtney, D-2nd District, after she received her certificate of completion as part of the first graduating class in the Outside Machinists Manufacturing Pipeline program during a ceremony Friday in the automotive lab at the Ella T. Grasso Technical High School in Groton. Looking on is Mary Ellen Jukoski, second from left, president of Three Rivers Community College.

Bonner is the only woman in the class, which originally started with 15 students; one was removed.

Some of the students came

to the six-hour classes, Monday through Friday, after working a full-time job. Some also have kids to take care of.

"There's been a lot of dedi-

cation from these guys," Bret Jackson, lead instructor, said. The six instructors, including Jackson, also come from a variety of different back-

grounds — the private sector, retired employees of EB, and the military. Jackson served 30 years in the Coast Guard.

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