The Bulletin

November 5, 2016

Job center a first for state



Matthew Jergensen, of Columbia, looks through job listings during Friday's ribbon cutting-ceremony for the new job training and adult education center in Willimantic. AARON FLAUM/ NORWICHBULLETIN.COM

Facility touts adult education, workforce training

By Francesca Kefalas
For The Bulletin

WILLIMANTIC — The state's first-ever fully integrated job training and adult education center opened Friday in Willimantic's Tyler Square.

A collaboration between EASTCONN'S adult education programs and the Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board, the center came to fruition as local, state, private and federal partners tried to figure out how to cope with the state's 2015 decision to cut funding to the region's job center.

"Eastern Connecticut does it right," said Scott Jackson, commissioner of the state Department of Labor since February. "Eastern Connecticut collaborates. They see collaboration that other regions of the state do not."

The center is the first of its kind in the state and will bring together EASTCONN'S adult education programs, such as GED and high school completion classes, employment skills and training with Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board's Manufacturing Pipeline, case management and employment resources.

Tashaun Haywood, of Windham, said he had to drop out of community college but still wants to better himself.

"I'm here trying to figure out what to do," Haywood said. "I think having this here is going to be good for a lot of people."

The center's official opening also came with an announcement from the Jeffrey P. Ossen Foundation's Eileen Ossen that it donated more than $500,000 to support the Eastern CT Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative.

"I wanted to do something that will help people," Ossen said. "This initiative will help people learn

SEE CENTER, A3



John Beauregard, president/CEO of the Eastern CT Workforce Investment Board, left, and U.S. Rep Joe Courtney take a tour of the ESL Room with Rich Tariff, EASTCONN director of Adult Programs, during the ribbon-cutting ceremony Friday.

AARON FLAUM/ NORWICHBULLETIN.COM

CENTER

From Page A1

a trade and make a good living."

John Beauregard, president and CEO of the Eastern CT Workforce Investment Board, said the donation will be for Windham area residents, but will extend the $6 million investment the federal government has made in the initiative.

Eastern Connecticut received one of only six federal grants to create the program, Beauregard said. Collaboration is a major factor in why the region was able to get the grant, he said.

U.S. Rep Joe Courtney, D-2nd District, said he recently was down at Electric Boat and met many of the company's new workers. They are coming from Texas, New Jersey and other states to fill EB's jobs, Courtney said.

There were 129 openings as of Friday morning, Courtney said.

"That goes against the notion that young people are leaving the state," Courtney said. "But we also want to have our young people ready and prepared to take those jobs. That's what this center is about."

Diane Nadeau, president and CEO of the Windham Region Chamber of Commerce, said there are good jobs in Eastern Connecticut.

"What we have to do is match the employee with the employer," Nadeau said.

Nadeau said she sees a better horizon for the region's economic development because of collaborations like the job center.

Windham Mayor Ernie Eldridge said the communities of the region have realized they must work together, with success continuing to breed more success.

"People want to work with successful people," Eldridge said.

The center will also have a trickle-down effect, he said. When a parent gets a job, or a better job, the children have less stress and can focus on their education, Eldridge said.

Rich Tariff, EASTCONN'S director of adult programs, said the two organizations are not just sharing space, they are sharing resources, staff and ideas.

Paula Cohen, EASTCONN'S executive director, said the partnership truly began years ago.

"Northeast Connecticut is an area that is on the cutting edge of doing things first," Cohen said.

U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., said the center is such a good idea people are going to wonder why it didn't happen sooner.

"This place will help all the people who walk through its doors fulfill their American dream," Blumenthal said.

Services offered

American Job Center East provides:

- Employment services
- Job-related workshops and referrals
- Veteran employment services
- Case management/individual guidance and support
- Connections to human services agencies
- On-site recruitment opportunities for businesses
- Career resource library
- Computer access for job-seeking

EASTCONN Adult Programs provide:

- GED and high school completion classes
- Basic adult education courses
- Employment skills and training
- U.S. citizenship classes
- English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) classes
- Two-generational programming (for ESL students)
- Spanish GED classes
- Community education classes

Fast facts

Get to know the new integrated job training and adult education center, located in Willimantic's Tyler Square:

- Newly renovated space accommodates both agencies
- Facility is 10,000 square feet
- It includes nine classrooms
- 20 offices are available for student-advisor, case management meetings
- EASTCONN and American Job Center will share rent and facility costs
- Internet-connected computers available for job-seekers
- Career resource library is on-site
- American Job Center hours: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday
- EASTCONN Adult Programs hours: 8:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. Monday to Thursday; 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Friday