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Rappahannock Community College
Michele Inderrieden
Media Services Manager
minderrieden@rappahannock.edu
(804)333-6824

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HCU17 and RCC SHINE

Haynesville Correctional Unit #17 (HCU17) and Rappahannock Community College (RCC) created a program that allows inmates to receive certifications in OSHA-10, Solar Panel Installation, and Career Readiness Skills. The SHINE Program—Solar Hands-On Instructional Network of Excellence—is the first field unit and Community College collaborative program being offered in the Eastern Region of Virginia.

The collaborative program includes three weekends of training and welcomed its initial cohort on March 4. The first weekend focused on OSHA-10 training and certification covering topics such as industry health hazards, hand and power tool hazards, fall protection, and more. In addition, career readiness skills were introduced. The next weekend provided more career readiness learning opportunities, including writing resumes, and the final weekend featured solar panel installation and the completion of career skills.

The idea for the program began when RCC received a grant that would allow workforce training to be brought to inmates who were within five years of being released. After joint meetings with Dr. Barna, the Vice President of Instruction for RCC, Dr. Scales, HCC Complex Principal, and HCC Complex leaders Warden Darden, Assistant Warden Thrower, and Major Darby, they all agreed that it would be beneficial to offer the program.

RCC was already approved to bring college classes to Haynesville and has been educating inmates since 2008. Adding the workforce and career readiness component was a logical next step. Inmates who participate in educational programs while incarcerated are 43% less likely to return to prison within three years, according to research by the RAND Corporation and the Vera Institute of Justice.

The first class of eight inmates successfully finished on March 19. The grant will allow for 5-10 person cohort groups. Inmates who successfully complete SHINE will be recognized at the HCC Complex graduation in November.

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Since 1970, Rappahannock Community College has been breaking down barriers to education in the Middle Peninsula and Northern Neck. Five degrees, 6 certificates, and 26 career and workforce studies programs are offered through RCC, in addition to nearly 40 guaranteed admissions agreements with colleges and universities across the state and region. For more information, visit rappahannock.edu.