

Butler Eagle

Training key for Industry

BC3 expands program with XTO support

Article published August 13, 2013
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BUTLER TWP — Butler County Community College and XTO Energy are developing a training program that not only will benefit the gas industry but also will help county residents tap into the long-term jobs the industry is creating here.

In April, XTO expedited those efforts when it gave the college a \$100,000 grant during the opening of its liquids recovery plant in Penn Township.

Plans have continued to move forward, and during the week of July 29, Lisa Campbell, BC3's director of business training programs, traveled to Texas with XTO officials to get a look at some of the training programs developed in that region.

Earlier in July, officials from BC3 and XTO, as well as Westmoreland County Community College and Navarro College, toured XTO's Penn Township plant together. They also started to discuss how they can work together to fill similar facilities across Western Pennsylvania with workers.

The Westmoreland college has been a hub for training as the coordinating arm for ShaleNET, which is a government-funded program that links job seekers to gas industry positions. Navarro, which is near Dallas, has a previous relationship with XTO, which also is headquartered in the Dallas area.

And during the past few years, BC3 has been offering gas industry training in the way of safety classes for first responders and roustabout training to produce entry-level workers.

However, these new efforts will prepare workers for the “next level,” according to Steve Catt, BC3 executive director of work force development.

He said the goal is to produce technicians who can work in the “midstream” operations of the industry. Those workers will operate processing facilities to break down and separate gas and the substances produced with it, and then help get those products to market.

“They need a higher level of technician to do that, and that's what we're working on,” Catt said. Campbell has been working directly with XTO supervisors to develop the curriculum.

“Our goal is to work with XTO to deliver a program (so) that we can train individuals to go to

work for them,” and also blend BC3's programs into Westmoreland County's associate degree programs, she said. “We learned a lot of good stuff,” she said of the plant tour and discussions in early July.

“They're very excited to work with us. They want to help us identify the training that we need, the courses that we need (and) just be a good partner with us in developing a program,” she added about XTO.

BC3 will put together a certificate program that will allow students to either enter the field after completion or transfer elsewhere to continue their education.

Lorie Jackson, an XTO spokesman, acknowledged plenty of time and resources go into developing such training.

However, she said the relationship is “excellent” and BC3 has been a strong partner by being responsive to the company's needs.

She said being able to hire locally will be a great help because the people who have the necessary skills now have to be brought in from out of state.

The need for those positions will only escalate as more processing facilities, which operate around the clock, are built or expanded, she said.

“They do want to hire local people,” Catt said. “That's a high priority for them. But in order for them to do that, they need to be trained.”

“They're going to be a very supportive employer,” he said, explaining that in addition to helping build the curriculum, XTO plans to contribute in other ways, such as providing tours, lectures and internships.

Catt and Campbell said many of the program's specifics will be hammered out over the summer.