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EDC Joins Pastors Alliance to Celebrate Manufacturing Graduates

Students Earn Nationally Recognized Manufacturing Credential through Collaborative Outreach Effort

Brevard County, Fla (October 8, 2015) – This morning the EDC joined an alliance of eight area churches alongside community stakeholders to celebrate the achievement of recent recipients of the nationally recognized Manufacturing Skills Standards Council (MSSC) Certified Production Technician (CPT) Credential. Following discussions earlier this year with the Economic Development Commission of Florida's Space Coast (EDC) focused on the EDC's Manufacturing Talent Asset Pipeline (TAP) pilot program to bolster skills and employment for the industry, Pastor Nathaniel Harris of Macedonia Baptist Church launched the collaborative Pastors Community Alliance seeking to enhance economic opportunities for unemployed individuals. Today's ceremony honored the CPT graduates of the inaugural class sponsored by the Pastors Community Alliance in coordination with the EDC.

The EDC's Talent Asset Pipeline (TAP) initiative seeks to develop a supply of appropriately skilled workers to enter careers in manufacturing. TAP starts with the MSSC CPT entry level certification and leads to a series of stackable industry credentials. Candidates with the CPT credential translate into employees with baseline skills primed for accelerated growth within a manufacturing company, a critical benefit to an industry which locally faces retirement by more than 60% of existing workers in the next decade according to the *U.S. Census Bureau, Local Employment Dynamics Program*. This demand for workers, coupled with declining interest in manufacturing careers over the last decade led the EDC to develop the TAP initiative under the advisement of the EDC's Industry Council, a group of 20 local manufacturers.

Pastor Harris formed the Pastors Community Alliance with a focus on education-to-employment for high potential, unemployed individuals across the congregations of the eight participating churches. The EDC's TAP initiative, anchored by the nationally recognized CPT credential, was an ideal fit for the alliance as the course offered graduates access to a career in manufacturing, an industry which offers high growth potential, competitive wages and benefits to its employees.

"I initially met with Lynda Weatherman and the EDC to understand the impact of recent business growth in our community and how our members could take part in this economic success," said Pastor Harris from a discussion with the EDC earlier this year. "After learning of the CPT program, I convened my peers, and we developed the Pastors Community Alliance, which creates an educational and employment pathway for those unemployed individuals that we serve."

The inaugural Pastors Community Alliance sponsored CPT class commenced with a small class in June 2015 and served as a proof of concept for the alliance. Four individuals graduated after completing the rigorous 10-week fast-track course and passing the associated four exams required to earn the credential. Students participated in hybrid curriculum focused on core skills for manufacturing administered via online coursework and instructor

led labs through Eastern Florida State College (EFSC). The EDC worked in tandem with EFSC to begin offering this course in June 2014 as part of the TAP initiative.

"We are beyond honored to celebrate the incredible accomplishment of these graduates." said Lynda Weatherman, President and CEO of the EDC. "We began the pursuit of a structured program to focus on stackable credentials in manufacturing to meet the needs of our existing industrial base, but TAP does so much more than that – it also opens the door and creates opportunities for these graduates to pursue a career which was previously out of reach."

In addition to the coursework, the Pastors Community Alliance set-up a computer lab at Macedonia Baptist Church to foster group participation in the online curriculum. The alliance also established a mentorship program to keep the students motivated throughout the process.

"As the program administrator for the effort, I felt compelled to make sure we were going above and beyond to provide resources to students who had no manufacturing experience. Pastor Harris and the rest of the community alliance were in full support of providing a hands-on approach," said Teri Jones, volunteer program administrator for the Pastors Community Alliance. "We secured donated computers and revamped a room at the church to establish a computer lab for the students' online instruction, and we paired the students with seasoned mentors, who were instrumental in their success."

The Pastors Community Alliance is a collaborative coalition of eight area churches including:

- Macedonia Baptist Church
- New Mt. Zion Baptist Church
- Scott Chapel United Methodist
- Greater Allen AME Church
- Destiny Life
- Mt. Moriah Missionary Baptist Church
- Shiloh Christian Center
- Christian Fellowship Church of God & Christ

Financial donations from Bright House Networks, Florida Bank of Commerce, Florida City Gas, Florida High Tech Corridor Council, the Pastors Community Alliance and Wells Fargo Advisors made it possible for the students to participate in the program.

The EDC is currently promoting a January 2016 CPT class offered through Eastern Florida State College and the Pastors Community Alliance plans to facilitate another group of students for this course. For information about the CPT course, how to enroll or become involved, contact the EDC at 321-638-2000.

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About the Economic Development Commission of Florida's Space Coast

The Economic Development Commission of Florida's Space Coast (EDC) is dedicated to attracting new business and investment and expanding existing industry throughout the Space Coast, influencing change on government laws and regulations affecting economic development, promoting the Space Coast to encourage new investment, supporting efforts of Space Coast military installations, and relaying new programs and procedures to assist manufacturing and high tech companies. The EDC is a private, not-for-profit coalition whose stakeholders are business leaders committed to the economic growth and stability of Florida's Space Coast. Visit www.SpaceCoastEDC.org.