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Ready To Work Makes Headway In Hernando

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BROOKSVILLE - Companies want credentialed employees.

Qualified applicants want to be hired by solid, reputable companies interested in keeping employees for the long term.

Now that Ready to Work has made its way to Hernando County, both sides should benefit, said program director Rick Chalue.

"We're trying to get people to realize it's up and coming in Florida," he said. "If companies hire the right person, they can save some money. It's a very valuable program."

Ready to Work is a nationwide credentialing program endorsed by the Florida Chamber of Commerce. It promises to give employers a better pool of applicants and a lower turnover rate.

Conversely, it offers free assessments and tutoring to those interested in finding jobs with some of the state's biggest companies.

Among those businesses that have signed on with the program are American Express, BayCare Health Care, State Farm, Winn Dixie and Hyatt.

Companies in Hernando County include Weeki Wachee Springs, Alumi Guard, Interconnect Cable Technologies Corp., Omni Circuits International, Joni Industries/Seaboard Company and Condor Pools.

The Hernando County Schools' adult education department announced it would be taking part late last year.

To become eligible through Ready to Work, applicants must take three monitored tests in the areas of applied math, reading for information and finding information.

If that candidate fails in one or more of the tests, he or she can receive free tutoring and take it again.

The assessments reportedly cover the skills needed to succeed in about 85 percent of all U.S. jobs,

representatives have said. They have been created by the same company that created the ACT college exams.

The tests can be taken at the adult education department at Nature Coast Technical High School in Brooksville.

"It's good for students to be exposed to this," said Nicola Barlow of Nature Coast Technical High School, who was selected to oversee the program in Hernando County. "When you go into the business world, the testing doesn't stop ... It's good to introduce a testing culture to them."

The credential certificates are broken down into three categories - gold, silver and bronze - and are signed by Gov. Charlie Crist.

"It's free," said Chalue, who has been marketing the program to local businesses. "Why more people aren't taking advantage of it is crazy."

For more information, call Barlow at 352-797-7088 or visit the Ready to Work Web site at www.floridareadytowork.com

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