

Career Directions

The Rapides Foundation Supports College and Career Readiness Programs

The Rapides Foundation

EDUCATION IMPACTS HEALTH

The Rapides Foundation's initiatives support mission

The Rapides Foundation's initiatives in the area of education and economic development are an important part of the Foundation's mission of improving the health status of Central Louisiana. Research tells us that when people are more educated, their health is better.

Through its Education Initiative, the Foundation seeks to increase the level of educational attainment and achievement as the primary path to improved economic, social and health status. One of the objectives in our Economic Development Initiative is improving economic opportunity and family income.

The Foundation's interest in these areas correlate the ability to earn a higher wage with other measures such as home ownership and ability to purchase health insurance. Research shows that people who achieve these goals are in much better health than those who are unable to do so.

Education and Health Calculator

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Commission to Build a Healthier America examined the many factors outside of medical care that influence health. It found that social factors like education and income can affect how long and well a person lives. To illustrate its findings, it created an interactive map that explores how education is linked to mortality in your community. Access the Education and Health Calculator by visiting www.commissiononhealth.org/Calculator.aspx



ON THE COVER:

Career Compass' Central Louisiana Director Crystal Burch (standing), and coach Beth Marshall help Alexandria Senior High School seniors (from left), Dae' Von Washington, Brittany English and Andrew McAlister create their College Success Plans.

Career Compass' Central Louisiana Director Crystal Burch guides Alexandria Senior High seniors Dae' Von Washington, and Andrew McAlister (right) through the post-secondary application process.

EACLASION THE FUTURE Career Compass provides coaching in Cenla high schools

he Rapides Foundation funds a program that provides students with individualized coaching to help them prepare for success after high school. In partnership with the Central Louisiana Technical Community College and the nine school districts, the Foundation is funding and providing support for Career Compass of Louisiana to operate in Cenla schools.

Coaches in the 2012-13 school year reached out to high school students individually or through seminars. This year they are expanding to reach out to even more students. Of the seniors who were counseled last year, 98 percent applied to some sort of post-secondary institution.

"Our goal is for every high school student to enter some type of post-secondary education or training. Not every high school graduate is going to a four-year university, but it is critical that they receive some training to get a job," said Marjorie Taylor,



FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

Executive Director of The Orchard Foundation, a nonprofit local education fund that works with school districts, businesses and communities to improve educational opportunities in Central Louisiana. The Orchard Foundation is funded by The Rapides Foundation.

Based in Baton Rouge, Career Compass of Louisiana is an educational nonprofit dedicated to helping high school students in their post-secondary endeavors. Its mission is to remove obstacles that would keep students from succeeding following high school graduation.

"By working with students year-round, we can make sure a relationship is built and those students are put on the right path," said Julie Scott, co-Executive Director. "If you can put them on the right path, then they will keep going. You are setting them up for success."

Coaches help students navigate the complexities of applying to post-secondary institutions. There are forms to turn in, application fees to pay, tests to take and deadlines to meet. One missed deadline, and the student could miss out on an opportunity. The process



the student stays on track with applications, tests and other paperwork. Other students have no idea what they want to do after graduation. Those students go through a "career inventory" to find out what their interests and strengths are. Then, coaches can use this information to help guide the student toward a technical school, two-year college or four-year university.

Career Compass holds grade-specific seminars for students in 11th and ninth grades. Juniors learn about the ACT and other college requirements. Ninth graders

Our goal is for every high school student to enter some type of post-secondary education or training. Not every high school graduate is going to a four-year university, but it is critical that they receive some training to get a job.

are taught to start preparing for life after high school. "With ninth graders, we try to get through to them that they can have a clean slate and create a new future for themselves, that what they do in ninth grade through 12th grade is going to follow them into college," said Crystal Burch, Career Compass' Central Louisiana Director. "For all students we really stress that

Marjorie Taylor, Executive Director of The Orchard Foundation

can be overwhelming for students and their parents. Coaches help keep everyone organized and on track.

"If you just look at the papers, things change so much over the years. There are no directions that come with the application process. But with Career Compass, we have it all in a manual. If a student wants to go to Grambling, the manual says everything the student needs to go to Grambling. It's all right there at our fingertips," said coach Sue Perkins, a former teacher and principal.

Coaches provide a wide level of support, depending on the needs of the student. For example, Perkins said some students already know what they want to do after high school. For them, Perkins simply makes sure there's something for everyone. That's our motto."

Career Compass has a good working relationship with guidance counselors, who are typically overworked and don't have the time to sit with high school students on a continued basis. In fact, results from The Rapides Foundation's Spring 2012 College and Career Counseling and Coaching Survey reinforced the need for help for guidance counselors and school staff. "We asked high schools what percent of their day they devote to career counseling. It was very small," Taylor said. "Unfortunately, they don't have enough hours in the day to devote to career counseling."

Kacy Edwards, co-Executive Director of Career Compass, said, "When we go into a school system,

Left: Alexandria Senior High School senior Brittany English gets guidance from Career Compass Coach Beth Marshall.

FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

we are there to make sure we do what the guidance department asked the student to do. Their ratio may be 450-to-1. We see the seniors one-on-one."

Career Compass also builds good relationships with parents and guardians. "I think some parents want to help their children, but they don't know how," Scott said.

Perkins said she has seen several cases like that. Sometimes parents or guardians want to send their children to a post-secondary school, but they lack the knowledge and financial means to do so. Coaches not only help students and parents fill out the proper paperwork for post-secondary institutions, but they also have a budget to help pay application fees. Coaches also help students secure financial aid.

In the first year, coaches reported many successes. "There was one girl who lived with her grandparents. She had an average GPA. She just thought there was no way she could go to college. When I sat with her the first day, she cried and said, 'I can't believe I can go to college. My grandparents will be so happy,'" said Burch, who also coaches.

Perkins talked about the rewards of seeing a student's eyes light up when they realize they can reach their dreams. "Every coach will tell you that same story ... how that light would come on when they realize why you were here, that you were there to help them."

Recognizing the importance of career coaching, The Orchard Foundation is helping districts find ways to increase their level of Career Compass service. Grant Parish, for instance, is using Carl D. Perkins grant dollars to supplement their career-coaching efforts. Rapides Parish included Career Compass in their annual work plan to The Rapides Foundation.

"We believe the lower you can get these services in a child's educational process, the better off they will be," Taylor said. "We want them to start thinking about careers when they are in middle school."

A grant from Procter & Gamble is doing just that. It is providing funding for career coaching in all eighth grades in Rapides Parish in the 2013-14 school year. Eighth-graders will take the EXPLORE test, which helps students plan their high school choices, prepare for the ACT and choose a career direction. The funding will also provide for two seminars for parents of eighth graders.

Both Scott and Edwards, who are based in Baton Rouge, commended The Rapides Foundation for bringing Career Compass to Central Louisiana. "I think school districts are really lucky to have a foundation care so much. I don't see that in other places. It's such a huge investment and involvement by The Rapides Foundation in the school districts," Edwards said.

Burch added, "It wouldn't be possible for us to be here without The Rapides Foundation's support. Just having them on our side is so helpful because they have such a good reputation."



Career Compass in The Rapides Foundation service area:

2012-13 school year

2,815 students completed the program.

98%

applied to and/or were accepted to a post-secondary school.

\$1,950 worth of fees secured for students in partnerships with local institutions.

FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

Spotlight on: Macey Beauboeuf

Senior year is busy enough with homecoming court, senior projects and prom to worry about. It's easy for a student to become swept up in the end-of-year excitement and forget about planning for life after graduation. Parents and guidance counselors step in, but one-onone counseling from a career coach made the difference for Pineville High School graduate Macey Beauboeuf.

"Her career coach made her realize her senior year was going to end and she needed to make that next step," said Macey's mom Cissy Beauboeuf, a Pineville High School teacher. "They would have one-on-one appointments. When students had time with their career coach, it was their time. Someone cared enough to come and consult with them about their future."

Macey is headed to Louisiana Tech this fall to major in speech pathology. "The Career Compass people really helped me realize that college was coming soon," she said. In addition to helping her focus on the future and develop a clear career goal, Macey's career coach told her about a unique opportunity to compete for a Louisiana Educational Loan Authority scholarship. Her submission, a video about her "game plan for life," won first in the state and earned her \$1,500 that she'll use for college.

FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

Spotlight on: Ibraheem Farmer

Like many seniors, Ibraheem Farmer wasn't sure what he wanted to do after high school. After graduation from Natchitoches Central High School, Ibraheem was still struggling with his college plans. His Career Compass coaches continued working with him during the summer, even after he put away his cap and gown.

He looked at community colleges and four-year universities, and his career coaches helped him send in his applications and paperwork. This fall, he is pursuing an undergraduate degree in Mass Communications at Grambling State University. He hopes to use his degree for a career that uses his communications skills to help people. He credits his Career Compass coaching for steering him in the right direction.

"It was tremendous. There were things that I didn't know, and they opened my eyes. They really did help me," he said. "Career Compass told me what I needed to do and I got it done."

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Spotlight on: Joshua Wright

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Joshua Wright always had big dreams. What he didn't have was the confidence or knowledge to reach them. That changed his senior year at Marksville High School when he got regular one-on-one coaching with his Career Compass coach, Barbara Barham.

"Career Compass helped me to be more confident. Mrs. Barbara taught me how to look at colleges, how to conduct myself in an interview," he said. "There was a point where I was signing up for all these schools but I was so lost. I didn't know what financial aid was. Mrs. Barbara came and helped me."

Joshua decided to "reach for the stars." He applied for, and got accepted to, the Young Americans College of the Performing Arts School in Corona, Calif., where he will spend the next two years touring the world. After that, he plans to go to a fouryear university, possibly LSU, and major in musical theater.

Joshua said his high school friends also enjoyed the personalized attention from their Career Compass coaches. "It gives students confidence to reach for the stars. I know a lot of people around here aren't brave enough to go and apply for all these big colleges. They are intimidated. But they did, and they got accepted."

FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

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Dodson High School business teacher Scott Canady instructs students Slayden Canady and Taylor Burnett (right) using the Career Ready 101 program.

READYEOR VOORK Cenla Work Ready Network prepares students for jobs

entral Louisiana students are being given another tool to help them prepare for careers after graduation. Through the Cenla Work Ready Network, high school students are offered the

chance to earn a nationally recognized certificate that demonstrates their work-ready skills to potential employers.

The Cenla Work Ready Network is a program designed to link education and workforce development efforts and align them with regional economic needs. The work is funded by The Rapides Foundation through a grant to The Orchard Foundation, a nonprofit local education fund that works with school districts, businesses and communities to improve educational opportunities in Central Louisiana.

"The Rapides Foundation supported the creation of the Cenla Work Ready Network with the understanding that workforce is the driver for economic development and income growth," said Joe Rosier, President and CEO of The Rapides Foundation. "The components of the network can help students prepare for and measure real world skills that are valuable for any occupation – skilled or professional – and at any level of education."

All public and private high schools and Central Louisiana Technical Community College campuses in the region have been given the opportunity for free access to the following ACT workforce products:



• **Career Ready 101** – a web-based, career training course that prepares students for certification with WorkKeys assessments.

• **WorkKeys** – a job skills assessment that measures foundational and soft skills. Assessment through WorkKeys can lead to earning the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC).

• National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) and National Career Readiness Certificate Plus (NCRC Plus) – a portable, evidence-based credential that measures essential workplace skills and is a reliable predictor of workplace success. The NCRC Plus adds a soft skills component that links personal characteristics to work-related behaviors.

• Assistance to high schools for the development of industry-based certifications.

"The NCRC is an important credential for a student to have as they go out into the workplace or go to a technical community college or university," Rosier said. All public high schools in Central Louisiana are involved in the network, and last year nearly 3,500 students enrolled in Career Ready 101, with hundreds earning the NCRC.

Retired Natchitoches Parish School Superintendent Dr. Elwanda Murphy is one of two educators who provide technical assistance on the Cenla Work Ready Network project for The Orchard Foundation.

> (Standing) Lakeview High School teacher Marissa Bejarana-Fernbaugh and Principal William Hymes work with seniors Chase Posey and LaKesha Demery on Career Ready 101 skills.

"I really believe this is such a worthwhile effort for all of our students and the schools. This is a very beneficial certificate for every student," she said. "Our goal is that everybody leaves high school with the NCRC."

Graduates have used their NCRC in a variety of ways. College-bound students have attached it to their applications for part-time and summer jobs. Others have used it to start careers straight out of high school.

"We've had a lot of successes," Murphy said. A Vernon Parish graduate, for example, reported that he went for a job interview and the employer said they wouldn't grant interviews to anyone unless they had a certificate. Fortunately, the graduate had one, and he got the job.





"It's sometimes hard to motivate some students because in their minds they think they're going to tear up the world after high school," Murphy said. That's why it's important to spread the word about the Cenla Work Ready Network.

At Sicily Island High School, Principal Marguerita Krause recognizes NCRC holders at graduation every year.

"I think the certificate has helped a lot of kids in this area because there are not a lot of job opportunities," she said. "So if these kids can have a credential that shows they are skilled in something, it can help them get employment."

Sicily Island was one of the first schools to pilot the program in 2011. Since then, Krause has seen numerous successes. "One girl told me that when she went to college, she went in to interview for a receptionist-type job and when she produced that certificate they said, "enough said, you have the job." So each year she takes that certificate when she applies for jobs" to get through college.

Several Sicily Island graduates used their certificates to get good jobs right out of high school, Krause said. "As a high school kid, employers don't know you from Adam. This gives them a leg up. This is nationally recognized, so it means something."

Schools take different approaches when offering the Career Ready 101 course. At Sicily Island, ninthgraders take it in their Freshmen Success class. Because the Foundation provides for two opportunities per student on the WorkKeys assessment during their high school years, 12th graders get the chance to take it again if needed.

Dodson High School business and civics teacher Scott Canady folds the Career Ready 101 curriculum into his classes. "For us, it's one more form of accomplishment for our seniors. Not all of them are planning to go to college. This is something that can help them attain a job right after high school," he said.

Canady said he set a goal "for every student in the school to participate in Career Ready 101 in some sort of fashion, and for every senior to take the certification test. So last school year we were able to do that."

Last year, two Central Louisiana school districts – Avoyelles and Rapides – mandated WorkKeys assessments for all high school seniors. Avoyelles Parish School Superintendent Dwayne Lemoine says results from WorkKeys and the ACT are good indicators in determining whether a student has the aptitude to go into the workplace or to some form of higher education. "They give parents and students a benchmark and help them make a decision. It gives

Dr. Elwanda Murphy helps Lakeview High School senior Bre' Ajhanae Grayson with Career Ready 101. them a better indicator of what the student will do after school."

This school year, Avoyelles is offering Career Ready 101 as an elective for high school students, Lemoine said. At graduation, students are awarded with a medallion for their scores on the ACT and WorkKeys assessment.

In Avoyelles and Rapides parishes, the school district is not the only group that recognizes the value of the Cenla Work Ready Network - the broader community has also embraced it. Community leadership teams in those parishes recently learned they were accepted into a county-level pilot program of the ACT Work Ready Communities Academy. They are two of only 16 counties nationwide accepted into the 12-month Academy. A community leadership team typically consists of representatives from local chambers of commerce, economic development groups, school boards, elected offices, civic organizations and businesses. Starting in October 2013, the community teams will attend Academy sessions to learn how to shape a strategy to match people to jobs, align workforce goals to economic development,



EDUCATION

What are Career Ready 101, WorkKeys, and the NCRC, & how do they fit together? STEP 2 **CAREER READY 101** WorkKeys WorkKeys is a job skills assessment Career Ready 101 is a training course that prepares system that can lead to the National you for certification with the WorkKeys Assessment. Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) This is your first step. You will be tested in these 3 Your WorkKeys scores in the 3 core areas will determine what level of the core areas: NCRC you are eligible to earn A new certificate called the NCRC Plus ranks individuals in the following soft skills categories: Applied Mathematics ★ Work Discipline: Productivity and dependability 🛨 Locating Information 🛨 Teamwork: Tolerance, communication, and attitud 🛧 Reading for Information 🛨 Customer Service Orientation: Interpersonal skills and perseverance ★ Managerial Potential: Persuasion, enthusiasm, and problem solving Then if you need to brush up on any of these skills, you can do so with lessons designed just for you. Individuals can earn the NCRC Plus by taking the WorkKeys Talent Assessment. STEP 3 NATIONAL CAREER READINESS CERTIFICATE (NCRC) WHY SHOULD YOU EARN THE NCRC? This portable, evidence-based credential measures your essential workplace Here are four good skills and is a reliable predictor of workplace success reasons why: Bronze score at least level 3 🛨 Stand out from other applicants Silver score at least level 4 Show potential employers ACT concrete evidence of your Gold score at least level 5 workplace skills Learn which workplace skills you can improve Platinum score at least level 6 🛨 Build vour earning power

READY FOR WORK

and link education and workforce together to improve skill levels. Upon completion of the Academy and implementation of the strategy, the community leadership team will have successfully established a sustainable, parish-based Certified Work Ready Community effort.

The other side of the Cenla Work Ready Network equation is for employers to be able to use it in their hiring process. Local employers are seeing the value of the National Career Readiness Certificate.

Kenny Sayes, President of Sayes Office Supply in Alexandria, said the NCRC helps him screen potential employees. "First of all, it shows he is willing to go through the (Cenla Work Ready Network) program. Second of all, someone else has done the work for me. It shows me their strong suits and weak suits."

Sayes said a job candidate holding the NCRC credential signifies that the job candidate has been taught about work ethic, something very important in the business world. "It is nice to know that someone has told him 'you come to work fully dressed and you do what you're asked to do, and that these things are expected from you.'"

In addition to preparing students for the WorkKeys assessment, Career Ready 101 teaches a variety of "life skills" such as financial literacy, career exploration, resume writing and interviewing skills, as well as soft skills such as customer service and work habit.

Teresa McConathy, Owner and Operator of Marble Slab Creamery in Leesville, encourages young people to get certified because it could make them stand out in the competitive job market. She gets six to seven applications a week, and only looks at 10 percent of them. Having those extra credentials could get them noticed.

"I would encourage high school kids to get that certificate," she said. "You can't get too much education. You can't get too much training. Each step they take to try to better themselves, that's another feather in their cap."

2.

JOBINATOR TO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS:

'To be successful, you need to have the skills.'

> hen a goofy-looking masked man walks into Central Louisiana high school cafeterias, he turns

heads. When that masked man – the Jobinator – begins asking students if they want a "lame job" after high school, he starts a conversation.

"We needed something that would appeal to the audience that we were trying to serve, and those were teenagers. You've got to find some way to pique their interest," said Marjorie Taylor, Executive Director of The Orchard Foundation, a nonprofit local education fund that works with school districts, businesses and communities to improve educational opportunities in Central Louisiana.

The Jobinator was created to get young people interested in the Cenla Work Ready Network. Realizing teenagers are a tough audience, the Jobinator is intended to relate to teens in a way that adults sometimes can't. He's funny, and he gets students to think about their futures.

JOBINATOR

The Jobinator made 26 appearances in Central Louisiana high schools during the 2012-13 school year, and more appearances are planned. He shows up during lunch, catching students when they're hanging out in small groups.

"Just the costume, when he walks in the door, kids immediately say, 'What is this? Who is this?" Taylor said. "Then he walks up to them in a very relaxed setting. It's a way to start the conversation and explain to them what the National Career Readiness Certificate is ... and why they want to have it. It's so they won't be stuck in these so-called lame jobs like dog food testing and underwater basket weaving. He can use these crazy ways to get them interested."

The Jobinator made such an impression that Procter & Gamble requested his appearance when Northwood High School eighth graders toured their



Pineville facility. Pineville High School requested him to show up at job fairs.

He has his own website – Cenlajobinator.com – as well as a presence on YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. He uses language that teens understand and can relate to. On his website he says, "Are you sick of hearing this question? What are you doing after high school? UGH." His social media posts are silly: "Not a good idea to eat Oreos before a job interview. Trust me on this." Or, "One interview question you must never ask: When is nap time?"

But his words all drive home the simple message that if you want a successful job or career after high school, you need to have the skills.

"As soon as you can, go and talk to your school's Jobinator contact about the Cenla Work Ready Network," the Jobinator says. "Like I tell all high school seniors, your life after high school depends on it."

CENLAJOBINATOR.COM

Visit the Jobinator's website: www.cenlajobinator.com

See the Jobinator's story on YouTube www.youtube.com/CenlaJobinator

rapidesfoundation.org



CENLA WORK READY NETWORK PROVIDES RESOURCES FOR ADULTS SEEKING NEW OR BETTER JOBS

n addition to providing assistance to high school students, the Cenla Work Ready Network helps adults who are seeking better employment opportunities.

The Rapides Foundation and The Orchard Foundation partnered with the Central Louisiana Technical Community College for this target audience to gain access to the same ACT workforce components that are offered in high schools: Career Ready 101, determine their skill level and determine their training needs; build confidence that their skills meet the needs of local employers; show prospective employers concrete proof of skills achieved; and improve the opportunity for the career change or advancement they are seeking.

Career Ready 101 and WorkKeys testing centers are located throughout Central Louisiana. Adults who are ready to increase their workplace skills can sign up

The holder of the credential can now walk into a human resources office and demonstrate, beyond any diplomas, that they are qualified for the job.

Joe Rosier, President and CEO of The Rapides Foundation

WorkKeys and the opportunity to earn a National Career Readiness Certificate. It allows underemployed, unemployed and incumbent workers to train, improve and gain certification of their skills.

"One reason people are unemployed is because they don't have the skills necessary to perform the jobs that our area needs," said Joe Rosier, President and CEO of The Rapides Foundation.

To date, 133 adults have received an NCRC and 228 received the NCRC Plus since the network was launched in 2011.

By using the Cenla Work Ready Network, adults seeking a new or better career opportunity can:

for this free service by visiting the website www.cenlaworkready.org or by calling the voice messaging system at 1-800-447-2795.

Meanwhile, the Cenla Work Ready Network is building its employer advocates in the region so that more employers will use the NCRC in the hiring and promotion processes,

said Marjorie Taylor, Executive Director of The Orchard Foundation. "You may not have an under or unemployed person walk off the street and take the NCRC, but if you have an employer who says he requires the test, the person will take it."

Need Skills to Get a Better Job?

Adults who are ready to develop the skills that employers demand for good jobs can get started.

Visit www.cenlaworkready.org and click on the "Need Skills to Get a Better Job" link. Or call the voice messaging system at **1-800-447-2795.**

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www.youtube.com/rapidesfoundation11

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