

the **FORCE** of **WORKFORCE** TRAINING

Sending people to work is still part of Tri-C's core mission

Sylvester Byers had spent the better part of his working days — 22 years to be exact — as a compounding processor at L’Oreal in Solon. But when the company pulled up stakes to move to Kentucky, Byers decided not to follow. He had family here. He had a home here. He felt settled. He didn’t want to move.

Byers was 49 years old, an age at which leaving what you know can be scary. However, he had a plan.

Byers enjoyed working on computers, so he signed up for some courses.

“I started researching different schools for CCNA (Cisco Certified Network Associate), then I heard about the Cisco program at Tri-C and how it was hands-on,” Byers said. “Here — day one — you are touching the actual equipment. You get to see what a switch is, what a router is. You put it on a computer. You work with it, and you work as a team.”

At 50 years old, Byers is one of the new faces of workforce training at Cuyahoga Community College.

THE NEW BLUE COLLAR

Think of workforce training, and lunch pails and sooty factories might come to mind. But many of today’s programs train workers for highly technical fields. Those seeking training may be looking to enter the workforce for the first time, or they may be reinventing themselves at a late stage in their careers.

“Our main focus is addressing the generational needs of the workforce,” said Alicia Booker, vice president of manufacturing at Tri-C. “We are establishing a talent pipeline. We need younger people in certain sectors, and we have older, skilled workers transitioning to health care and IT.”





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started the classes, it fit with what I knew already. There is a technology side to it, too. There is conventional machining, but this machining is more computer-based. It mixes the new and old.”

Lally finished the program and now works as a CNC machine operator at Swagelok.

REVERSE ENGINEERING

Booker spends a lot of time meeting with representatives of local businesses, assessing what workforce talent they need and how Tri-C can deliver it. This results in unique programs with a laser focus on the skills needed by Northeast Ohio workers.

Some programs result in stackable certifications, like the CISCO training Byers completed. Others are targeted at sectors of the population, like senior citizens or those who have run afoul of the law and need a new start.

Tri-C’s Workforce, Community and Economic Development division offers workforce training in health care; information technology; advanced manufacturing and engineering; truck driving and logistics; and public safety.

“We are training for what a job will look like in five years,” Booker said. “Industry is so fast-moving. Technology changes everything so fast.”

She said the legacy of workforce training sometimes makes its modern incarnation a tough sell, even though many of these programs result in jobs that offer sustaining wages. Those who complete Right Skills Now, for example, can expect to earn \$15-\$16 per hour, according to Swagelok. Median pay for computer support specialists in 2014

Byers is part of the latter group.

“At first, I was scared,” he said, “but I knew this was what I had to do. You have to come in there ready to study. You really have to focus on it. The coursework is so detailed.”

He finished his CCNA and CCENT (Cisco Certified Entry Networking Technician) certifications along with CompTIA A+ and Network+ certifications. Now he wants to earn CCNA security and wireless certifications, and he has already finished the coursework.

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE

Brant Lally is 22 and recently finished Tri-C’s Right Skills Now program. He had worked for five years as a sheet metal fabricator, a job his father helped him into following high school, but it didn’t suit his style.

“We actually went on site and installed things, so there was a lot of weather. I don’t like being out in the cold or out when it’s really hot,” Lally said.

His mother alerted him to the Tri-C program, which usually results in a job at Swagelok following completion of the coursework and an internship. Lally was interested, and then one day, providence nudged him.

“My last day on the job, I cut my finger really bad and I had to go to the hospital. I had to get a bunch of stitches. I had to do some therapy on my finger,” Lally said. “And this was right before the Right Skills Now program started. That pretty much made my decision for me.”

He enrolled in Right Skills Now not long after.

“Doing five years of working with sheet metal, I had that knowledge base behind me,” Lally said. “So when I

was \$50,380, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

In addition, the kinds of jobs Tri-C workforce training prepares students for are not as subject to market fluctuations as some “white collar” jobs.

Booker has worked in workforce development for 25 years. “What’s really changed is the interest,” she said. Northeast Ohio has strong health care and IT workforce opportunities, and these are correspondingly popular programs at the College.

The College awarded 1,302 certificates in fiscal year 2015, up from 599 in fiscal year 2014.

“Cleveland has a diverse workforce, and everyone is in it at the same time. Young people are not finding the same pathways into it that their parents had,” Booker said.

Byers can relate. His son, Sylvester Jr., is enrolled at Tri-C’s Eastern Campus.

“I tell my kids, ‘You don’t want to be like this.’ I took a job in manufacturing, and it was paying good, so I just stayed there. I stayed because it was comfortable,” Byers said. “Now, here I am at a later age and I have to go back to school. I have to buckle down, just focus on the school and get it done.”

WHAT’S OLD IS NEW AGAIN

While workforce training allowed Byers to break the complacency cycle, it helped Lally avoid it. He said he knows he is in the right place at Swagelok. “I’m indoors,” he said. “It’s nice.”

“I grew up in Solon, and Swagelok is a great company. I had heard so much good about them that I wanted to go there.”

Lally said that he also would like to grow there. He plans to go back to college — possibly Kent State University — to earn a bachelor’s in engineering.

In May 2015, the Cuyahoga County Veterans Service Commission hired Byers. He is now the guy county workers call when their computers are giving them grief.

He loves it.

“I can’t see myself anywhere else,” Byers said. He enjoys solving problems and likes the people he works with. “They like me, too, because they say the last IT guy talked down to them. You go around and you laugh and talk and work with people.

“I tell everybody every day that it took me 50 years to be able to say that I love my job. There are some nights I can’t sleep because I can’t wait to get there.”

THE **WORKFORCE**, COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIVISION OFFERS THE FOLLOWING PROGRAMS:

HEALTH CARE

- State-Tested Nursing Assistant
- Patient Care Nursing Assistant
- Home Health Aide Professional
- Comprehensive Patient Access Specialist
- Medical Coding and Billing
- Community Health Worker
- Continuing Education for Healthcare Professionals
- Continuing Education for Dental Professionals

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- Computer Essentials
- Cisco Technical Training Institute
- Computer Programming
- Cyber Security Analytics Certificate
- Database Administration
- IT Service and Support Technician
- Microsoft Office Training
- Net Developer Cohort
- Network Administration and Support
- Technical Communication
- Web Design

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING AND ENGINEERING

- 3D Digital Design and Manufacturing Technology
- Skilled Construction Trades
- First Energy Power Systems Institute
- Industrial Maintenance
- Industrial Welding
- Precision Machining
- Auto CAD and Solidworks
- Computer Numerical Control (CNC)
- Manufacturing Technical Readiness
- Nondestructive Testing
- Steelworker for the Future
- Quality Assurance
- Right Skills Now

TRUCK DRIVING AND LOGISTICS

- Class A CDL Truck Driver Training
- Class B CDL Accelerated Training
- Passenger and School Bus Training
- Powered Industrial Truck/Forklift Operator Training
- Hazardous Materials



PUBLIC SAFETY

- Basic Police Academy
- EMS Advanced Training
- Fire Advanced Training
- Fire Training Academy
- Firefighter Physical Agility Testing
- Law Enforcement Advanced Training
- Private Security Academy