



Strategic Planning and Empowering Futures
Synergy between Workforce Development, Economic Growth, & Adult Education

ADULT EDUCATION Newsletter

Summer
2024

Strategic Planning and Empowering Futures

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The Adult Education Section hosted its annual strategic planning meeting June 18-21 at the Fairfield Bay Conference Center. By focusing on performance, program monitoring, and professional development, the Adult Education team set goals and strategies to best serve their target population in the 2024-25 program year.

The team chose “SyncED for Success: Aligning Adult Education & Workforce Development” as the theme for the meeting--reflecting Adult Education’s resolution to support the state and agency’s goals of strengthening economic development and understanding their role in the expansion.

Jim Fram, Certified Economic Developer (CEd), consulted with the team and identified several critical components for successful economic development. Adult Education can best impact the workforce by understanding the skills and talent needed by employers.

To best understand what employers want, Adult Education heard directly from business and industry partners. Fram facilitated a panel discussion with local economic development partners, business, and industry representatives. The panel was comprised of the following individuals.

- Ginger Harper, CEO/President, Heber Springs Chamber of Commerce
- The Honorable Kasey Griffin, Mayor of the City of Heber Springs
- Steve Compton, Plant Manager, Newterra, Heber Springs
- Steve Franks, Plant Manager, Siemens Industry Inc., Heber Springs
- Kevin Storey, President, Baptist Health Medical Center, Heber Spring & Baptist Health Medical Center, Stuttgart.

Among other topics, the panelists gave insight into their greatest challenges in today’s workplaces, ways Adult Education can assist in meeting the challenges, and how to move from planning to action. The panel also shared ways to increase business/industry outreach and engagement.

In addition to the Adult Education team members, representatives from Arkansas Workforce Connections and Arkansas Rehabilitation Services attended the meeting.

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Congratulations Class of 2024

Arkansas Adult Education centers throughout the state are celebrating another year of realized potential and student successes.

Arkansas Northeastern College Adult Education

Arkansas Northeastern College Adult Education has seen great progress, and we could not have done it without the entire ANC Community helping us along the way. ANC celebrated 42 graduates during 2023-24—the most ever recorded for the program.

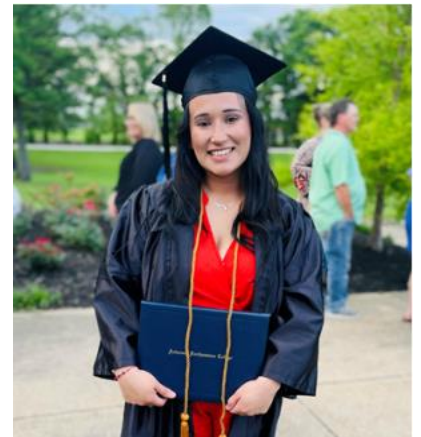


Amanda finished the GED® program in just 40 days with great success. She was initially motivated to enroll to "do a better life." She admits that math was the hardest portion of the program, but she is thankful for the support from ANC staff members--Mrs. Sullivan, Mrs. Buchanan, and Mr. Graham. She also wants to thank two friends who were essential in motivating her in her progress, V'Ronika Barber and Herashio Hawkins. She plans to enroll in ANC Nursing. She says, "the teachers were amazing and very helpful... I would do it over 1000 times with ANC's awesome support, staff, and program!"

Falanda has been a part of the ANC Adult Education off and on for the last five years. She says that she is thankful for the patience of ANC's Adult Education program in working with her at her own pace. She was motivated by the fact that "there was a job I wanted to apply for and could not get it without a high school diploma."



Caderis was with ANC Adult Education for just under 6 months and was initially motivated to enroll in GED® classes because of his sister's success in the program. He said the hardest part was "pausing his bread to get ahead," meaning he had to take less hours at work to fulfill his education goals. He wants to thank the teachers, mentors, and the opportunity bus for assisting him. His ultimate goal is to get a doctorate degree in music while continuing his rap, filming, and cooking careers. He wants to share that he is committed to spreading the word and finding more individuals to join the program. Saying, "It has helped me so much, and I want to help others in this way."



Caitlyn has been in the program for just four months. She reports, "I got dropped from high school, and it felt like my life was going downhill, and I knew I had to get it together!" She wants to thank her teachers and Aunt Jamie for being her biggest supporters. She plans on pursuing a career in cosmetology. Her thoughts on the program were, "I absolutely loved the environment and people who made me feel so welcome!"



Irene enrolled in the ANC Adult Education program 10 months ago. She wanted to get the GED® to create a better life for herself and her family. She adds that her husband "has been my biggest supporter along with my children." She says her biggest obstacle was juggling the responsibilities of life with a "full-time job, mother to three beautiful children, and school." She found the online program very beneficial while she worked full-time. She wants to thank Timothy (her husband) and her children for being her "rock" and supporting her through everything. Her goal is to become an LPN/RN and excel in the nursing field.

Phillips Community College UA

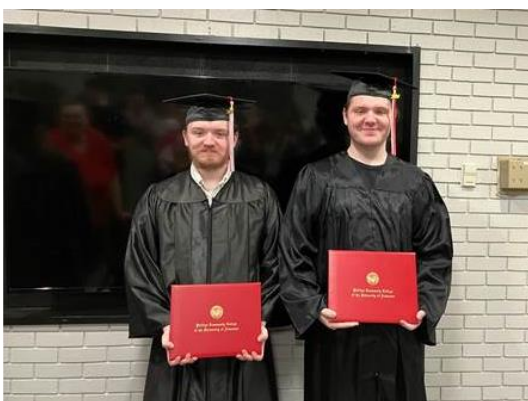
During a ceremony on the Helena campus, the 2024 GED® graduates of the Adult Education Program at Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas (PCCUA) were honored for this outstanding achievement. Congratulating the graduates on reaching this point in their educational journey, PCCUA Vice Chancellor Dr. Deborah King told them to invest in their future, make life their classroom, and have confidence in what they do.

Serving as the student speaker for the ceremony was GED® graduate Brittany Garrison, who congratulated her classmates on this accomplishment, adding that because work is such a big part of life, "you've got to find what you love."

Serving as speaker for the evening was Marianna Mayor Ora Stephens, who encouraged the graduates to put the knowledge, learning, and understanding they've achieved to use in their lives, noting, "We finish to begin," which she said was the theme of her high school graduation. She urged the graduates to keep moving forward in their journeys, adding, "Get prepared, be prepared, and you will have the key."

Adult Education Director Christina Saunderlin and paraprofessional Adline Chandler participated in awarding diplomas and congratulating the new graduates.

Among those from the Helena-W. Helena campus receiving an *Arkansas High School Diploma* through the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services were Landon Correro, Brittany Garrison, Armontez Harrison, Payton Hopper, Aydan Howard, Jamie Howard, Sasha Knibbe, Bailey Mooney, Dalton Mooney, Clayton Potts, Katelyn Potts, Allyson Rhodes, Jessica Robert, Sabrina Summers, and Trent Walker.



Shorter College Adult Education Center

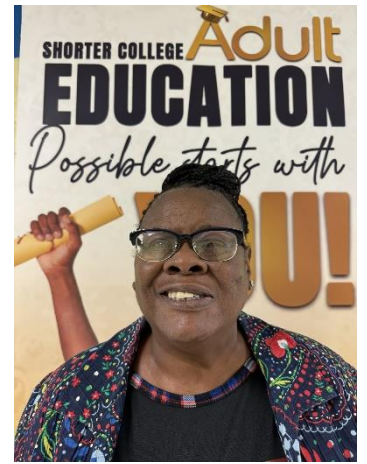
Bethal Louise Rhodes grew up in North Little Rock, the second child among four brothers and four sisters, surrounded by a bustling family dynamic that she deeply cherished. From her earliest years, the family held a special place in Bethal's heart, driving her to spread joy and laughter among her siblings and relatives through board games, volleyball matches, and bike rides. Her mother's grape and strawberry ice cream cups were a beloved indulgence on scorching Arkansas summer days.

Her educational journey began at Lakewood Elementary in North Little Rock, followed by stints at Hall High School and Northeast High. However, during her sophomore year, Bethal made the difficult decision to leave school to support her family financially. Over the years, she took on various roles at companies like Tyson, Maybelline, and Rack Videos. Among her favorite jobs was caring for bedridden patients, a role where she found fulfillment in aiding others.

Despite the challenges she faced, Bethal pressed on, eventually welcoming two sons, DiMario and Thomas, into the world. Throughout her life, her godmother, Gloria Lane, played a significant role in her upbringing, providing guidance and support.

On June 15, 2022, Bethal walked into the Shorter College Adult Education offices, determined to further her education. Despite struggling with computer skills, she persevered, diligently working on her WAGE™ certification alongside her other coursework. Despite moments of doubt, she never gave up, and on July 17, 2023, Bethal achieved her goal, earning her WAGE™ certification.

Bethal Louise Rhodes epitomizes determination and perseverance, serving as an inspiration to all who know her. Shorter College Adult Education is fortunate to have her as a student, blessed by her tenacity and spirit.



East Arkansas Community College Adult Education Center

Meet four of the individuals joining the ranks of 2024 graduates at EACC Adult Education.

Evette Moore-Jones is a determined individual who embarked on a remarkable journey to achieve her Arkansas High School Diploma despite facing the unique challenges of being 100% visually impaired. For the past four years, Evette has immersed herself in the EACC Adult Education program, navigating obstacles with unwavering determination and a thirst for knowledge. Despite her absence of sight, she utilized adaptive technologies, the supportive staff and instructors, and her indomitable spirit to conquer each subject area, from mathematics to reading, language arts, science, and social studies. Even when setbacks happened, Evette never lost sight of her goal. Finally, after years of hard work and dedication, Evette Moore-Jones will proudly walk across the stage to receive her Arkansas High School Diploma, inspiring others with her resilience and determination to overcome any obstacle that stands in her way.

The culmination of months of hard work and learning helped Jackson Grant complete his Arkansas High School Diploma! The day he completed his diploma, he was employed! Currently, he is employed by a local HVAC Contracting business and hopes to pursue a degree in Residential Heating and Air Conditioning.

Jake Pickett obtained his Arkansas High School Diploma in just 14 days! His determination and drive proved to be the tools needed to achieve his goal. Jake hopes to further his education by attending EACC Welding courses in the fall.

Jasmine Callahan is a personal care aide who to EACC Adult Education to advance her career by becoming a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA). But she had to overcome one hurdle before achieving that goal: earning her high school diploma. Jasmine completed those requirements in just five days! She is now on the path to furthering her education and becoming a CNA to continue helping her patients



Central Arkansas Adult Education Graduation

On Thursday, June 6, more than 130 GED® graduates and WAGE™ certificate earners participated in the Central Arkansas Adult Education Ceremony. The program completers were from Adult Education Centers at **Arkansas Baptist College**, the **Little Rock School District**, the **Pulaski County Special School District**, **Shorter College**, and the **University of Arkansas-Pulaski Technical College**.

Overall, 2,659 students passed the GED® in Arkansas for the 2023-2024 program year, leading to an 86% pass rate for Arkansas for 2023, one of the highest in the nation.

Venezuela-born Sofia Wilson spoke on behalf of graduates at the ceremony. In January 2023, 24-year-old Wilson enrolled in an English as a second language class at an adult education center. Officials said Wilson completed her ESL studies last June “at the highest level”, and she decided to pursue her goal of becoming a nurse. This led to her enrolling in and completing the GED® program, and she has been accepted into the University of Arkansas at Little Rock’s nursing program.

“People can take things away from you, but they can never take away knowledge,” Wilson said. “Earning my Arkansas High School Diploma will now allow me to attend college to study nursing.”

The keynote speaker for the ceremony was Derrick Hunter. Mr. Hunter shared the unique story of his life’s experiences. He encouraged the audience to persevere through their life’s challenges.

State Senator Jane English also spoke to the graduates. Senator English has been a long-time supporter of Adult Education and economic development.

In a letter to the graduates, Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders complimented them on their achievement, telling them, “I know this graduation will mark the beginning of a new adventure in your lives, and that is something that I hope brings you and your loved ones’ pride.”





ARKANSAS ADULT LEARNING
ResourceCenter

ADULT EDUCATION Newsletter

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Arkansas Division of
Workforce Services
Adult Education

The Arkansas Adult Learning Resource Center

continues to provide excellence in professional development for Adult Education practitioners statewide.

Visit <https://aalrc.org/register-for-training/> register for training and information on training sessions for the 2024-25 program year.

National Career Development Association Global 2024 Conference

The 2024 National Career Development Association (NCDA) Global Career Development Conference occurred in San Diego, California, from June 26-28, 2024. This year's conference explored the intersection of career advancement and mental health strategies, emphasizing a holistic approach to promoting well-being and success.



After attending the conference, LaTasha Dale Warren, Certified Career Services Provider and Career Development Instructor, and Sulideisi Camacho, Career Coach with the Division of Workforce Services Adult Education Section, have better connected the importance of integrating emotional well-being with career fulfillment to prepare learners for today's workforce challenges. Both found the conference profoundly enriching, providing fresh insights into serving underserved and underrepresented clients.

The conference featured over 100 sessions, many of which drew packed crowds. Noteworthy sessions included "Public Library Services and Resources for Immigrants and Refugees," "The Impact of a Community-Based Response on the Well-Being and Employability of Justice-Involved Individuals," and "AI-Powered Career Counseling: Exploring the Potentials of ChatGPT".

NCDA, a cornerstone in the career development field, offers vital support through professional development, publications, standards, and advocacy.