

NEWS RELEASE



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First class of Energy Auditors graduate

CENTREVILLE---Fourteen individuals graduated December 17 in the first class of Energy Auditors. The Energy Auditor/Workplace Readiness training program was funded with a \$100,000 grant made possible through the Kalamazoo-St. Joseph County Michigan Works! and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Glen Oaks staff wrote the grant and created the training held from September 8 to December 3. Instruction in the GOCC Business Development Center came from professional trainers and energy consultants/trainers. The program is part of a state-wide effort to retrain displaced workers in “green” energy-related occupations.

The 13-weeks of instruction resulted in Building Performance Institute (BPI) National Certification and Building Analyst Certification, as well as completion certificates in Home Performance Sales and Marketing and Advanced Equipment. The BPI Certification is issued by the Building Science Academy located in Sparta. Workplace Readiness Certification involved training in key skills for employment, including problem solving, oral and written communications, information technology applications, professional and workplace ethics, customer service and much more. Individuals selected for the training came largely from industry and building-related fields.

The graduates also earned the Michigan National Career Readiness Certification (NCRC) through Michigan Works! This certification recognizes skill levels in three core WorkKeys assessments: Applied Mathematics, Locating Information and Reading for Information. These “real world” foundation skills are often critical for job success.

Speaking after a buffet-style luncheon was Amy Butler, Director of the Bureau of Energy Systems and Michigan Department of Energy Labor and Economic Growth (MDELEG) Economic Recovery Coordinator. The

director said the future is bright for Energy Auditor jobs in Michigan. “You absolutely made the right choice by completing this training,” Butler said in encouragement.

Kari Scare, Director of Business Services at Glen Oaks, said the graduates “worked well together and grew so close that several of them are considering forming a business together.” Scare said they took the training very seriously and met as a study group outside of class on Friday mornings. “The instructors had wonderful things to say about these graduates. Those of us at Glen Oaks appreciated the feedback the students gave us in this first Energy Auditor class. The community support they received was tremendous and Beth Ash, of Prudential Real Estate, offered to let them practice their energy auditing skills on their listed homes,” Scare added.

Wayne Martin, one of the newly certified energy auditors, said the training provided he and the others with “hope.” He said he and others had been laid off for lack of work, their jobs may have been outsourced or companies closed. “This program has given us a new hope and a new career in a ‘green’ way of thinking. We have the instruction now and confidence to start our own business or to be employed by others. Most of us had not been in a classroom in many years, but we now have the skills and confidence to provide for our families and achieve our dreams.” Martin thanked his wife for working two jobs so he could complete the energy auditor program.

Graduate Steve Penner echoed Martin, “As I took this training I realized how bad my own house was on energy conservation.” He and others are wrestling with where to list their services in the Yellow Pages, “This field is so new that many people may look for energy conservation services in several places,” said Penner.

Glen Oaks President Dr. Gary Wheeler thanked the graduates and noted, “We are proud of all of you. You represent an investment in our community and Glen Oaks Community College is behind you. We want to see you succeed.”