

YouthBuild Program Helps Local Student Find his Future in Welding

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GODFREY – Just less than six months ago, Andre Ewing, of Alton, Illinois, did not have his high school diploma. Now, he is a student in Lewis and Clark Community College’s Welding program.

“Andre made a decision to join YouthBuild in March, 2016, and he hasn’t looked back,” said Associate Dean of Adult Education Val Harris. “At 18 years old, he has completed his high school equivalency, has dedicated himself to serving the community and is already taking college classes. His future is bright.”

Building Futures: YouthBuild AmeriCorps is designed to assist 16- to 24-year-old participants in their efforts to attain their GED, earn a Pre-Apprentice Certificate Training (PACT) certification and transition to college.

YouthBuild is one of 80 programs in the nation that is also an AmeriCorps affiliate, which promotes and reinforces the program's mission to encourage leadership development and social awareness through community service.

"YouthBuild was a great opportunity to do something," Ewing said. "The community service was fun, and I like to be outside doing work. I knew it would help others, too. I felt like I was doing something right. I got a lot from it. Not only did I get a lot of certificates, but also leadership skills and a sense of mind. I am glad they have YouthBuild. It really helped me, and hopefully, it will help others. I feel like it will."

At first, Ewing didn't know if he was going to like it, but he signed up anyway. Despite it being a hot summer, he still enjoyed being outdoors and making a difference in his community.

"If I didn't go to YouthBuild, I would still have an average job," Ewing said. "In my opinion, if you are considering joining YouthBuild, you should definitely give it a try. As long as you stick to it, you will enjoy it. In the end, it is really worth it."

Ewing graduated with his GED in June 2016 and transitioned into the Welding program at L&C.

"I have experience from welding in high school, and I enjoyed it a lot," Ewing said. "It was my favorite class. I considered taking classes in truck driving, but I decided to go into welding. One person, who was in YouthBuild and also high school with me, is now in my welding classes. I thought that was cool."

Lewis and Clark Community College is one of 84 adult education providers offering programs funded through the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) that improve and expand the nation's available pipeline of workers by assisting those who lack the educational requirements to achieve gainful employment in today's increasingly high-tech, global job market.

"I am so proud of Andre, because of his dedication and hard work, and the support he received from Building Futures: YouthBuild, he has transitioned beyond YouthBuild to college," Harris said. "This relatively new focus on college transition provides students like Andre, who work hard, with the opportunity to catch up with their peers and to find their rightful place in this community and in the economy."

For more information about adult education programs and services at Lewis and Clark Community College visit www.lc.edu/adulted. For more information about YouthBuild, visit www.lc.edu/Youthbuild.