

# Woodstock Job Corps a 'green' light to success for center students

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As the national Job Corps marks its 45th year, the program's Woodstock center is looking to the future — and it's green.

In a celebration last week, the Woodstock Job Corps Center announced several new initiatives intended to help students prepare for "green" jobs, as well as projects to make the center itself more environmentally conscious.

The Job Corps is an education and training program of the U.S. Department of Labor for 16- to 24-year-olds that allows them to receive a GED and learn a trade, such as construction, health occupations, culinary arts or retail trades.

"It is a milestone because it's one of the only job training programs that has lasted this long," said Tanisha Nixon, director of the Woodstock center. "We're very proud of that."

The Woodstock center is looking to launch several sustainability projects, such as a solar panel training station, installing wind turbines atop two of its buildings and installing energy efficient lighting throughout the campus.

"Job Corps is definitely going green," said Brenda Sierra, the center's career services director.

In addition, The Green Building Institute, a Jessup-based nonprofit, is providing free "green" courses worth up to \$2,500 for students at the Woodstock

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Dave Woolley-Wilson, executive director of the institute, believes a working knowledge of environmental sustainability is key for those in the job market because of growing demand for renewable systems, particularly in the construction field.

The center's new collaboration with the Green Building Institute was one of several highlights of a Sept. 23 event at the center to commemorate its anniversary. Also that day, the center's landscaping students worked on a beautification project at the Howard County Conservancy.

Laura Seiple, land manager at the conservancy, said the students are helping to plant a new garden at the conservancy's entrance. The project also marked a new relationship between the Woodstock center and the conservancy, she said.

"Having the labor provided for zero

cost is a huge asset to us. For them, it is a way to gain experience hands-on," Seiple said.

## Corps 'like a second chance'

The Job Corps program was created in 1964 and is funded by Congress. The Woodstock center was founded in 1971 and is one of two centers in Maryland. The center has the capacity for up to 505 students, whose housing, meals, monthly stipend and performance-based salary are provided through the program.

For Tiana Smith, 20, of Columbia, the Job Corps provided an opportunity to complete her GED after she dropped out of high school at age 16, and is a step toward her goal of working in the medical field.

"This is like a second chance for me," Smith said. "Especially now that the economy is bad, it's very hard to find jobs. This is a stepping stone to help you out."

Fellow student Cephus Berry, 19, also of Columbia, has enjoyed his experience at the center, where he is learning to become a welder.

"It's a great experience. You get to meet new people," he said, adding that he enjoys going on the weekend trips organized by the center to entertainment venues such as batting cages and theme parks.

"It gives a lot of people another chance in life to get that GED and learn a trade at the same time," he added.