

Information on educational opportunities shared - Sanford Herald, The (NC) - March 1, 2022

March 1, 2022 | Sanford Herald, The (NC) | DAVID POLLARD DPOLLARD@SANFORDHERALD.COM

Economic, educational, faith-based and community leaders met in an effort to move people forward to learn about opportunities they may not know about.

About 50 people, made up mostly of area ministers and civic leaders, met at the Dennis A. Wicker Civic and Conference Center Monday morning to look attend an event titled: Workforce Development Awareness for Community Faith-Based Leaders/ Moving our communities forward.

The event was organized by Sanford City Councilman Byron Buckels with the intent to share opportunities, economic and educational, with certain parts of the communities.

Jimmy Randolph, CEO of the Sanford Area Growth Alliance, was in attendance and spoke to the group about the city and county's strides in economic development, like Pfizer and a future increase in job opportunities as a result.

Randolph said it would be great that the new job opportunities could be filled locally. His statement piggybacked on piggybacked on by staff members of Central Carolina Community College (CCCC), who talked about their educational opportunities to be trained to fill jobs at those companies Randolph referred to.

One woman gave her testimony during the meeting that after losing her job due to COVID-19, she was able to get a better one at Pfizer after taking classes at CCCC related to the jobs at the company and at minimal expense.

Lisa Chapman, president of Central Carolina Community College said that's the aim of the college.

"What the college wants to do for you is help you," she said during CCCC presentation during the meeting. "We want to help people change their lives."

They talked about the college's Job Corps Program, how, depending on where you live or certain circumstances a person can qualify for free college classes and incentives for high school students to get a start on the college career by taking classes at CCCC at the same time.

Buckels hopes the community and faith-based leaders in attendance take the information and opportunities they received back to the communities they serve.

"I want to make sure all the communities are aware of the growth and opportunities that they can take advantage of," Buckels said. "We as a community have a responsibility to respond to the opportunities that are offered to us."

He organized the meeting because not enough people are taking advantage of these opportunities or just don't know about them, especially minorities and black males.

Buckels said with the help of meetings like this, it can provide more opportunities for everyone. He plans to have more in the future to gauge progress.

"I hope in the near future we can come back with solutions from the group and address other opportunities for our community," he said.

Margaret Robertson, vice president of Workforce Development at CCCC, said she was glad she attended.

"I really appreciate us coming out and starting a conversation," she said. "I hope it's the first of many."

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