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RCC Welding Facility in New Kent Opens for Students

Students, instructors, community and governmental partners, board members, and Rappahannock Community College employees celebrated the highly anticipated official opening of RCC's newest welding facility located in New Kent. The cafeteria area in the former New Kent High School has been transformed into a state-of-the-art instructional welding facility.

"RCC is grateful for the support of New Kent County, the American Welding Society (AWS), and GO Virginia," said RCC President Dr. Shannon Kennedy. "Through these partnerships and the support we received, RCC is able to train more welders and get them into the workforce faster," added Kennedy. The facility has 11 individual training booths. Dual-enrolled high school students attend in the morning or the afternoon and adult students attend in the evenings. Saturday classes will begin later this year. By May 2025, these students will learn SMAW (Shielded Metal Arc Welding) commonly called ARC welding, GMAW (Gas Metal Arc Welding) commonly called MIG, FCAW (Flux Cored Arc Welding) referred to as FLUX, GTAW (Gas Tungsten Arc Welding) or TIG, and ASME IX Pressure pipe welding, and be ready to become certified and head into the workforce.

It is estimated that in the next year, 480,000 welders will be needed nationwide. "The shipyard is hiring on a regular basis, seeing about 50-60 new hires monthly," said Lynn Showalter, AWS Director-at-Large and Welding Engineer 5 at Newport News Shipbuilding. "RCC students have a great understanding of the welding processes and what working in an industrial environment entail. That's key. And this facility is in a great location to get these new welders in jobs at the shipyard."

Rodney Hathaway, New Kent County Administrator, addressed the crowd, "This is an exciting day! The project is truly a partnership led by Dr. Kennedy. I thank her for her dedication to working to improve the workforce in our region." Hathaway thanked the Board of Supervisors, the contractors and others who helped bring the facility to life. "By investing in our residents, New Kent County and the region is building a stronger, more resilient community."

The facility has all new Lincoln 300C multi-process welders, Lincoln Prism welding extractors, and Miller Dynasty 400 water cooled TIG machines, and students were happy to give tours and talk about the program. Most agreed that they love welding and the chance to create something and work with their hands. "I'm looking forward to training these students at our new facility,"

said Roman Eppig, RCC Welding Program Head and instructor. "Welding is a valuable skill that can lead to a rewarding and lucrative career."

"Our instructors are focused on safety, quality, and the responsibilities associated with certification," added Kennedy. "I'm proud of our program and excited to see this facility come to completion."

RCC is still enrolling for evening classes beginning on September 17. For more information on this program, contact RCC at (804)758-6730 or email advisor@rappahannock.edu.

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Since 1970, Rappahannock Community College has been breaking down barriers to education in the Middle Peninsula and Northern Neck. Five degrees, 6 certificates, and 26 career and workforce studies programs are offered through RCC, in addition to nearly 40 guaranteed admissions agreements with colleges and universities across the state and region. For more information, visit rappahannock.edu.