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Ridley Lowell Diploma Provides Key to Jobs Now and in the Future

By Meg Barone

The familiar music of Pomp and Circumstance is generally reserved for June or December graduation ceremonies, and is rarely heard in the month of October. But the melodic strains of Edward Elgar's classic commencement music resounded through the Amber Room in Danbury on Oct. 14 as 48 students of Ridley-Lowell Business & Technical Institute in Danbury filed proudly into the event.

For some of them they were the first members of their family to graduate from a higher educational institution, and it was also the first graduating class of the accredited school's Danbury campus. Many of the graduates are parents, and their children attended the ceremony.

"What an inspiring and powerful message for the next generation that their parents were finishing up their education towards getting a meaningful job that they're passionate about, where they can make more money, have more job security and enter into the world of benefits," said Lauren Weymouth, director of the Danbury school.

Ridley-Lowell was established under another name in 1850 by Daniel W. Lowell and has grown to include four campuses in Connecticut and New York. The Danbury location opened in 2010.

As those students marched toward their degrees they were also marching toward a brighter future. Armed with diplomas in medical assisting and massage therapy, those graduates are now entering the workforce with relevant job skills to fit the needs of society.

"They are in the process of being placed (in jobs). Those who studied medical assisting had a 160-hour externship as part of their program in the last module, where we actually place them in hospitals and medical practices in the region. A lot of the students were hired right from that externship," Weymouth said.

The demand for medical assisting, even in this roller coaster economy, continues to grow and Weymouth said Ridley-Lowell is working to accommodate that need. The school is developing relationships with other medical facilities in which to place students in externships, which in turn may lead to employment as soon as they graduate from the technical institute.

To further meet the demand for skilled workers in the medical industry, Weymouth said Ridley-Lowell has added to its curriculum Medical Billing and Coding and Medical Administrative Assisting. The school has also added Electrician Systems Technician and Information Technology diploma programs. Classes are forming now for January and enrollment is currently being accepted for those and all the school's degree programs. Day classes begin Jan. 4 and evening classes will start on Jan. 11.

The Electrical Systems Technician program will provide

students with basic information on safety, electrical theory, measuring instruments, AC/DC, national electrical code, reading schematics and blueprints, and wiring for residential, commercial and industrial structures. Students who complete the program will have attained the skills to work as an electrical apprentice, electrical or electronics installer or as a repairer in various industries.

The Information Technology program gives students hands-on experience with computer operating systems, software applications, Office Suite, hardware and maintenance,

"We dedicate our syllabus to be in line with the shifts in the market. Our mission statement is all about reflecting the needs of the market," Weymouth said. The school stays ahead of the curve through graduate and employer surveys and an annual Advisory Council.

Those Ridley-Lowell students who have completed their coursework are eligible to sit for their national exams to earn particular certifications, where necessary, Weymouth said.

The recent graduates can tell prospective students they will gain more than just academic knowledge.

Weymouth said about 240 people attended the graduation ceremony. Students invited their families and friends, those people who comprise their support system. Perhaps unbeknownst to them as they enrolled in the Danbury school, those graduates not only gained relevant job skills and career opportunities; they also gained another support system in the administration and faculty of Ridley-Lowell; and not just during their time in the classroom but for the rest of their working lives.



"...marching toward a brighter future."

"Our job placement assistance is lifetime," Weymouth said. "They can have their work experience for two, three, four years and then come back and say 'I want to move

networking, forensics, and network security, as well as a host of other knowledge. Students will be prepared to support end users and programmers in business environments and will have experience with operating computers and peripherals.

All the school's programs include classroom course work and hands-on experience.

Education, particularly in this job market is critical to finding a job and to job growth, Weymouth said. Higher education can equate to being hired, she said.

"When you're looking for a job, whether you're changing a career or having a new career, and you are job hunting, an education will make a difference for you in landing that job or in the starting salary you can command or in your own confidence," Weymouth said.

Those just recently out of high school and considering what career they would like to pursue, as well as those people who have lost a job to this sluggish economic or those who would like to change careers can take advantage of Ridley-Lowell's upcoming classes.

New federal regulations are mandating that the medical profession move away from paper records and to electronic record-keeping, which will only increase the need for more medical personnel with computer skills. Weymouth said Ridley-Lowell offers a course in Electronic Health Records within the school's medical assisting, medical billing and coding and medical administrative assisting.

on from this job.' Maybe they were at a large hospital setting and now they want to be in a smaller office, or maybe they were concentrating on orthopedics and now they want to get into cardiology. We can help them refresh their resume and their interviewing skills and send them out for job interviews through our network," Weymouth said.

"Due to the fact that Ridley-Lowell is family owned and operated, the owners and directors are not in some white tower six states from here. They are here, on campus, every day. There is an exceptional sense of support here," said Dean of Education Nina Cudney, who is also head of job placement.

Cudney said the support begins the minute students enroll at Ridley-Lowell. "Students are not numbers here. We're small and personal and we actually care about our students," Cudney said. That means the typical reaching out to a student who is struggling in the classroom to going the extra mile to help a female student and victim of domestic violence find safe harbor in a women's shelter.

"We're not just a diploma mill. We do whatever we can to help students rather than trying to fit students into a particular mold. We don't have a mold," Cudney said.

For more information about Ridley-Lowell Business & Technical Institute, or about enrolling in upcoming classes, call the school at 203-797-0551 or visit the website at www.ridley.edu, or email dbadmissions@ridley.edu.



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