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ENC WIN Apprenticeship Summit Unites Education, Industry, and Workforce Leaders to Grow Eastern North Carolina's Talent Pipeline

Williamston, NC — More than 45 representatives from community colleges, public schools, healthcare providers, manufacturers, and skilled-trades employers gathered today at Martin Community College for the ENC WIN Apprenticeship Summit, hosted by the Rivers East Workforce Development Board (WDB).

The summit introduced the new Eastern North Carolina Workforce & Industry Network (ENC WIN) initiative, focused on building sustainable regional apprenticeship partnerships designed to strengthen the local workforce and expand opportunities.

Jennie Bowen, Director of the Rivers East WDB, welcomed participants and emphasized the power of collaboration among educators, employers, and workforce partners to meet the region's rapidly changing employment needs.

Participants heard from Scott Panagrosso, Regional Consultant for ApprenticeshipNC, followed by a series of industry spotlights highlighting apprenticeship success across eastern North Carolina including:

Ja'Queta Gatling, Workforce Development Coordinator at Roanoke-Chowan Community Health Center (RCCHC), shared how healthcare apprenticeships are helping rural providers fill critical positions, improve retention, and create internal career pathways. Danielle Swain of Nutrien outlined the company's long-standing apprenticeship and Master Craftsman programs that build advanced technical skills for long-term workforce stability in advanced manufacturing realm. Rachel Davis of Advance Mechanical described the Tradesformers youth pre-apprenticeship model, which introduces high school students to the skilled trades and connects them with local employers.

The session concluded with a success story of a local healthcare apprentice, Latoya Ward Tann, a Licensed Practical Nurse at RCCHC, who shared her inspiring journey from Certified Nursing Assistant to LPN—showcasing how apprenticeships open doors to career advancement while addressing essential healthcare needs in rural communities.

The event concluded with a presentation from Patrick Jacques, Business Engagement Coordinator for Rivers East WDB, who introduced the ENC WIN Apprenticeship Hub — a coordinated framework connecting employers, educators, and workforce partners to design apprenticeship programs that meet regional demand.

“ENC WIN gives employers another tool to help recruit, train, and retain a skilled talent pool,” said Jacques. “Our goal is to make apprenticeship a cornerstone of regional workforce strategy — building talent pipelines that align with local industry, strengthen our economy, and provide clear career pathways for residents across Eastern North Carolina.”

Breakout sessions followed, allowing employers and educators to identify workforce challenges and map out next steps for sector-based collaboration through the new Hub.

About the ENC WIN Apprenticeship Hub

The ENC WIN Apprenticeship Hub was created to help Eastern North Carolina employers “grow their own” workforce. Led by the Rivers East Workforce Development Board in partnership with NCWorks, ApprenticeshipNC, local Community colleges, and local Employers, the Hub:

Provides a single point of contact for businesses seeking to launch or expand apprenticeship programs.

Leverages WIOA funding tools such as On-the-Job Training (OJT) and Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) to offset training costs to the employer.

Connects employers with education partners for classroom alignment and credentialed instruction.

Builds career pathways that retain talent and sustain long-term economic growth across the region.

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