

Local

GRADD offers scholarships with focus on hard skills

✍ By Austin Ramsey Messenger-Inquirer

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The Green River Area Development District has reshaped its on-demand jobs training scholarship program to emphasize hard skills learned outside the classroom.

Money is available for some 50 to 60 scholarship recipients this year, but program developers say they want to extend their service to students and trainees to get paid for work-site training and internships that employers are looking for in new hires.

Michelle Drake, GRADD's workforce development business and training administrator, said eligible applicants may receive scholarships of up to \$5,000 annually for colleges and universities whether they are currently enrolled or are planning to attend. Industry sectors of preference include energy, advanced manufacturing, health care and social assistance, transportation, finance and professional, scientific and technical studies.

This isn't the first year GRADD has offered regional scholarships for the Green River Workforce Development Area, but Drake said money for scholarships through the dislocated worker program and for both youth and adults should also be used to ensure that scholars have opportunities to get real-world experience.

"That's what we're hearing from employers -- that they need a more than just an educated work force," she said. "Employers want work experience."

GRADD offers scholarships year-round for four-year colleges, two-year schools, trade schools and more. Scholarship orientation meetings are held weekly in Owensboro and Henderson. In Owensboro, workforce development officials meet at 1:30 p.m. Tuesdays and 9:30 a.m. Thursdays at the Kentucky Career Center at 3108 Fairview Drive.

Drake suggested that people take advantage of orientations to learn up-to-date information about the scholarships, which depend on state and federal funding. She said the first-come-first-served scholarships are awarded based on needs and experience among a variety of other factors. Individual circumstances are taken into account during the selection process.

More information about scholarships and orientations sessions are available online at gradd.com/WD/Traning_Opportunities/ or by contacting Alisha Smith at alishar.smith@ky.gov or 270-686-2546.

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