

>> Hello, and welcome to The Valley Today.

I am your host, Janet Michael.

We are live in the studio today with Guy Curtis from LFCC's Workforce Solutions and we're going to learn stuff today.

>> Yeah, me too as well. Yeah, we're here.

>> Well, you're not going to learn that much because you just realized you left your phone in the car so you're limited in your access to information right now.

>> That's right, yeah. I feel like I'm missing an arm or something like that.

>> Poor Carlene, she's like, "Do you want to run back out to the car and get it?"

Because I would be in halves by now,

if I realized two minutes in.

>> I can disconnect for at least a half hour. I'm good.

>> Really?

>> Yeah.

>> I think so.

>> You're my new hero, yeah because I definitely couldn't.

I'm excited because Carlene Hurdle is back.

She is their Corporate Training Director for LFCC Workforce Solutions.

We're going to talk about FastForward,

which we've talked about several times.

But this time, we're going to have a little bit of a different focus, right?

>> Right. Our FastForward Program,

for those who don't know is a great credential funded program by the State of Virginia.

The community college system has afforded
the opportunity for the non-credit courses that we offer at the college.

A way to incentivize folks who get into some of these high demand areas,
and we've had some tremendous success.

There's been stories of individuals in manufacturing,
construction trades, IT, healthcare.

Even some of our transportation programs have
tremendously benefited from the FastForward programs,
and individuals like Ed Bruen for example,
he's a gentleman who was a dislocated worker,
got his GED through our ABE program at the college,
and found his way to our an empty one program which is a FastForward based program.
Now, he's making more disposable income,
he's got a better schedule.

There's other individuals like Keisha Smith,
she's a Phlebotomy Technician who got her program done through us, through FastForward.

She actually paid only \$96 for a course because
FastForward also comes with a financial assistance package,
and she was a single mother who was homeless.

So just a tremendous opportunity,
she was one of those ALICE individuals looking for a way out,
and finding a better career,
and she got her program done through us, through FastForward.

We've had some other different audiences too,

not just an older adult who's looking to find their way,
but younger audiences like Jonathan Vogel from
Prince William County and Faulkner County cohort we did for high schoolers.
That's a FastForward program for heavy equipment operator,
and Jonathan is now working full-time for a company in Northern Virginia.
Then lastly, a local grad, Bradley Klutz,
he was another individual who took our FastForward program in CompTIA,
and he's now working for a federal contractor in
Murray after our awesome guaranteed and interview program,
and that is all wrapped around FastForward.

We've talked about how successful those individuals are,
but the businesses who are benefiting directly from these individuals
coming out with the right skills is benefiting them tremendously.

We want to give more light to what businesses can do with FastForward themselves,
not only receiving the dedicated pipeline of qualified staff,
but they have the opportunity to engage FastForward themselves.

>> Because that's the key. At this point,
you're doing a great job of getting the people
into the programs to learn the different skill sets.

But it's a workforce development thing where
these businesses need to know what their next steps are,
and what do they have in place in order to bring these people
on board when they've graduated with this credential and have the skill set.

>> Right. What we're seeing is that this setup where you would just

hire directly from the program and companies looking for folks that have the credentials or have the skills, isn't providing a big enough pipeline to satisfy the needs.

What we're advocating for, and what I think our messaging is to employers is that this FastForward tuition funding that's available to individuals extends to companies.

If you wanted to set up an internal training program and send your high-potential employees through one of our credential programs to get those skills, the state will still pick up two-thirds of the tuition on behalf of that individual, so the company could pick up the one-third.

It just makes the programs incredibly affordable for a company.

In other words, there's really no way they could even stand up their own program for what they're paying in the one-third tuition.

I think our message to employers is, "Hey, did you know that FastForward tuition funding while, yes, it's intended to pay for the individual, you, as a third party, can pay only the one-third of that tuition fees and start to build the talent within your own organization, and grow your talents and satisfy some of those needs."

Because really, the unskilled positions within a company are always the easier ones to fill.

But then, how do you spark that creativity and that development to grow your own workforce and have

a pathway or a succession plan within your organization.

I think we got away from that, one time,
people stayed with the company for a really long time,
and they were developed,
and we got away from that.

Now, we have this skills gap.

I think everyone acknowledges that,
and I think businesses are struggling to fill that gap.

We're just saying, "Hey, put a little bit of skin in the game.

It's not going to cost you that much."

>> It makes so much more sense to use the employees you already have.

>> Absolutely.

>> Those that have been with you,
those that already at least understand the functionality and the basics of your company,
and just train them into the skill set that you're going to need them to do.

Doesn't mean you're not going to hire new people coming out of the FastForward programs,
but it's going to be a whole lot easier to use what
you've got and bring them to the next level.

>> Absolutely. You know what else we're seeing that I think it's just very interesting?

We talk to employers all the time,
and there's Gartner reports and lots of research to support this.

But for the first time ever,
we're now seeing that people are making decisions about where they're going to work
based more on development opportunities than on actual pay. It is becoming a unique.

>> So it's not just in radio?

>> Right. But it actually becomes a way

to compete against other organizations when you can't compete on pay.

With the FastForward program,

and being able to only pay one-third of the tuition to get people skilled,

it's just a win-win.

>> It makes sense too because you hear a lot about the millennials,

and some of these kids that are just coming out of high school,

and they want to make good money,

but they also want to have freedom to work sometimes when they want to work,

to travel, to do these other things.

At the same time, in an aging workforce they may want to spend more time with grand kids.

They may want to be able to have a little bit of

flexibility to go home at five o'clock and turn everything off.

It really does appeal,

being able to say, "Hey,

I've got this great development opportunity,

it's going to make me better even if

it doesn't necessarily come with an increase in pay."

>> Right. It becomes an attraction strategy for attracting new individuals,

but it also becomes a very powerful retention strategy for companies to

continually skill their workforce and put them into higher and higher skilled positions.

>> What kind of companies are we talking about?

Are these office related companies?

Are these electrical engineers?

Are these heating and air conditioning?

What types of businesses can most take advantage of this?

>> We offer, correct me if I'm wrong, Guy.

>> Sure.

>> About her 18 different credential programs currently,

we may be up to 20 now.

We just added some additional ones,

but it's really across industries.

To answer your question, it's healthcare, it's,

IT, it's trades, it's construction.

We could list probably at least half of them out.

>> Manufacturing as well.

>> Yeah, manufacturing.

>> Also transportation of the CDL program too.

I think the other thought of it,

as well as the employers need to take ownership of this effort,

and I think a lot of them have,

they're realizing it's going to be hard for people to just show up

to my doorstep to apply for the job that I have open today.

But they have to do some recruitment effort to

really showcase why it's good to work for them.

Also find ways to work with the workforce like Carlene was saying earlier,

the front line staff or the entry-level position,

they've shown some dedication to the company.

How can I develop the person or retain them long-term?

Because obviously, the return investment's greater if you can keep an employee versus losing them to a competitor or some other industry.

We know a lot of employers are thinking that way,

but they're just like, "How can I really get started?"

I think that's where we come in and provide

that solution with the funding and dedicated credentials that those employers need.

But also, additional assessment,

if you will, or understanding the,

"Here's the resources that you're going to need,

and here's how we can support you."

So really having a different opinion or thought of rather being someone internally,

we can provide that outward look to say, "Hey,

these is things that we can recommend and provide a solution to you as an organization."

Because that's also part of our corporate training delivery.

In addition to some of these training programs,

we can really custom tailor an approach and assess

your organizational needs to get your company off to the right direction,

whether it's customer service, HR leadership.

But, really, the funding piece for a lot of

these skilled credential programs and I think that's where that ticker, the mindset is,

I need to start that myself,

we need to develop something internally.

>> Which is expensive.

>> Yeah.

>> It's expensive.

>> Like you said you don't know where to start.

I mean it's also difficult to have a guest for a business owner who's run

a particular business for a lot of years a certain way,

and now they're seeing "Wait I'm going to have to make some changes,

but I don't know what those changes are,

I don't know where to start to make those changes,

I don't know who's going to help me to implement them".

You answer all of those questions.

>> Right, and I think that's where we become the trusted partner

because we are constantly updating our curriculum.

We partner with national organizations to issue these credentials.

We purchased the equipment using grant funding and all sorts of

other state funded sources that companies just frankly wouldn't have access to.

To be able to stand up,

one of these training programs internally could be

extremely cost prohibitive and here we have a turn-key solution,

and we're offering it to you at a third of the cost of the tuition.

It really does take a lot of

years of front-loading of creating

your own training program and we have already done all of that work for you.

You just send your folks to us.

We talk about having some of these programs already scheduled out in open enrollment programs that you can find in our catalog, but if a company has a need for a specialized cohort or to send us a group of folks that they would like to have trained as one group, we can do that.

We can set that up, we can customize different pieces of it, and then they still get the credential.

It really does provide that turn-key solution.

>> The cool thing that I've learned just from all the conversations with Guy is credentials typically are a whole lot faster.

They're are obviously a lot less expensive than degrees.

You don't necessarily need degrees for everything now it's not your grandmother's college education anymore and it saves on time, which then equates to saving on money.

>> Yeah, exactly. They're a lot of them are short-term in nature.

A lot of the credential programs,

I think the shortest one we have,

if for example you had a logistics or

some kind of transportation company that needs individuals to get their CDL-B or A in 20 days or even 15 days or believe for the B license.

Some of the programs could be done in a short period of time in a condensed manner, or over weeks of a period of a time that is conducive to the employees schedules.

So if you do have a workforce that needs to be on the front lines of

doing X wherever they are in the position of the company,

we have training solutions that could provide something in the evenings in the weekends.

The midnight hours of training staff or

getting off a shift that makes the most sense for those who are getting off.

As far as delivering that,

we have a lot of customizable options for those employers to consider,

and not have to remove those individuals from the front lines.

>> Let's take a break, when we come back can we walk through maybe some examples.

I know that Carlene you were writing some things down about

some specific companies and kind of say this is how this started,

this is what we did, this is what it turned into,

and here's where they are now. Can we do that when we comeback?

>> Absolutely.

>> We'll do all of that when we come back.

It is LFCC Workforce Solutions they are here in the studio.

We are live with Guy Curtis he is with LFCC Workforce Solutions.

Carlene Hurdle is also here she is their Corporate Training Director.

I am Janet Michael.

This is The Valley Today.

We'll be back in just a couple of minutes.

>> Hi. This is Attorney Suzan Herskowitz.

We've all heard the phrase "Where there's a will there's a way".

Take that phrase and apply it to yourself.

When you make time to connect your will to your final wishes,

you're making sure that what happens is what you want.

The State has a will for you,

even if you don't have one for yourself,

should you pass without a will or trust,

your assets will be divided according to the State's guidelines,

not based upon what you or your family wants or needs.

When you hire Attorney Suzan Herskowitz, you get me,

you'll never meet with an assistant because you and

your family are worth my complete and undivided attention.

Am licensed in Virginia,

West Virginia, and even Florida.

I also focus on business law,

real estate, and elder issues.

To find me, just look in the Yellow Pages or search Suzan Herskowitz online.

I won't make you spell my last name,

but my first name is spelled S-U-Z-A-N,

just like it sounds Suzan.

Let's make sure where there's a will there's a way applies to you.

Visits suzanherskowitz.com and make an appointment.

>> Welcome back to The Valley Today.

I am your host Janet Michael.

We are live in the studio today with Guy Curtis from LFCC Workforce Solutions.

Carlene Hurdle is here with him.

She is their Corporate Training Director.

We've been talking about the FastForward program and I mentioned at the top of the show that we've talked about that several times.

But this is kind of a little bit more employer focused because that's as important in these credentials, is having the employers understand that they can get some of the same financial benefits that the students can get that are actually going through the program.

>> Right, and as I said earlier, these are turn-key program, so this is very little investment on the part of the employer.

They simply pay the 1/3 price of the tuition and we provide the training.

In some cases we provide the training at our location, or we can, depending on the equipment and everything, bring it on site.

But I think what it is really important about that and what we were talking about on the break, is that we've always understood that there's a huge population of under-employed folks who need to better their situation in life, but we've never really had a way to identify them.

They don't seem to self identify.

The United Way did this fantastic study a few years ago and names them ALICE, which is really just an acronym for Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed.

It's what we grew up calling the working poor, and in many cases these folks want to be loyal to their employers,

but in order to better themselves,

they typically have to seek employment elsewhere.

What we're saying is, if you want to keep them

local and you want to keep them engaged and employed,

invest a little bit in them,

and you'll reap huge rewards in terms of retention,

and you can start to turn the tide on some of

this outbound commuting that folks end up having to do to find those higher paying jobs.

>> And that ultimately makes the entire community

stronger because when you have people who are living in a community,

working in a community,

they're shopping in a community,

they're going to school here,

it just makes the entire community better and

then ultimately that comes back as a good thing for the employer as well.

>> Right, I mean it's an economic development strategy,

it's a workforce development strategy,

and it really does keep our communities healthy and whole.

This gives employers the ability to play in that space.

I mean, we know that fast-forward programs are the fastest proven way out of poverty.

Guy at the top of the show talked about

some very specific examples and we've even seen it within companies.

We had a fantastic heavy equipment operator cohort.

This same time last year actually come all the way up from

Southern Virginia and sent seven of their laborers up to us for an intensive two-week session, where we trained them to be heavy equipment operators and they went back and received pay raises. They are now operating equipment in that company sings our praises and my goodness, they're not even here. They actually sent their guys up and put them up in hotels and made a nice investment in developing them because they are so short handed. But again these are folks who exhibited the work ethic that was needed for that company and they were a cultural fit, but they just needed to be up-scaled and we were able to do that in two short weeks.

>> And that's even better for companies that are local, that are just down the road in Winchester or just up the road in the Luray and I'm probably getting that backwards. My husband always yells at me, that I said "up" or "down" in the wrong directions and so I started just saying "over" but then apparently that wasn't right either, but it does make sense because if you are local, this is an even better bonus program for you.

>> Absolutely and like I said, this is a turn-key program, so we're really excited about it. We have seen even on a statewide success level, that FastForward really is making a difference for that ALICE population.

>> So walk me through an example.

You just gave one with a company that sent their employees here to be trained, pull a program and kind of walk me through if somebody is in a particular industry, heating and air conditioning for example, and they have staff that they want them to maybe train up for a particular skill set.

I mean, how does that work if they say, "Hey, this is who we are and we need, what would they need and what could you do"?

>> In the skilled trades, it's slightly different because we operate those as apprenticeship programs.

What that would do is, if the company wanted that person to receive some additional training, we divide up per each part into four levels.

Depending on what their experience level is, we could put them into one of those four levels and get them skilled up and at the same time they are accruing their OJT or they're on the job training hours that are needed to get them to that journeyman or master licensing.

In that particular case, it's extremely important to those companies to utilize this.

It's called the related training or-

Yeah. What they call it?

The related training that wraps into their licensure.

That's how it would work for a company like that.

I can give you another example.

We worked with an asphalt paving company.

All they really knew is that they had a need for folks within their organization that could replace motors, that was their issue.

We brought out our subject matter expert and we spent some time with them and went through and designed an industrial electrical basics program.

What we found was, when we trained them on how to troubleshoot and other things, they were no longer having to replace motors because they understood what was causing the motors to burnout in the first place.

They just absolutely cannot tell you what the return on investment was for them because they now have the internal skilled folks who can do that and who are doing more preventative work rather than triaging disastrous situations.

>> It makes sense too because it's one of those things where you can customize your program, like in their particular case, they knew what their problem was.

But it could be that there's a company out there that needs something taking care of that you already have a program for.

>> Right. We can always work backwards from whatever their pain point is and provide the turnkey solutions to solve those problems.

In this case, with FastForward, so much of that work has already been done.

I know we're spending some time talking about construction and trades,
but this applies to our IT certifications.

Right now, cyber security is in everything.

I mentioned manufacturing and there's so many opportunities,
I think now, for companies to be
vulnerable to cyber attacks in ways they never even imagined.

These IT credentials can help upskill some folks within your organization.

If that becomes a focus area,

we have the programs to get them those credentials.

>> Healthcare was another one that, Guy,

you mentioned earlier, that's a huge one as well.

>> Healthcare, absolutely yes.

That's naturally booming in this area just because the nature of health and so forth.

Also others too.

One thing we have mentioned in the past that a lot of
these programs do reflect the direct needs of our employers.

We have added two other programs recently in Amazon Web Services,
IT credential, and also our CDLB course is also another FastForward credential.

In the future, as things progress,

we don't want to let the cat out the bag yet,

but there are some additional thoughts that we have towards our manufacturing programs,
those are continually advancing.

The thought is we may have additional credentials down the road.

I think that's the other part too,

if we have an employer or two or multiple ones that we see that they're lacking the skills they want to develop their staff for, we will continue to look at ways to incorporate those programs and then of course, try to find the way to do it through FastForward.

It's another opportunity that just because once we have 18 or so, 20 year credentials we have now, we may have five or six more before we know it.

>> Yeah, it doesn't mean you're capped out.

I think that's one of the major benefits of what your program does is that you really can tweak and turn and add things, and you're very much working with the companies and the businesses in this area, which we talked about earlier, is so important for people who don't want to get in the car and drive an hour, hour and a half, sit in traffic to get to a job.

>> Absolutely. Just back to that point.

I was just thinking as far as the economic development effort and having local employers invest their own people being part of that initiative of reverse commuting back to our area that some of the wages that I've seen that we've seen through FastForward have been as low as 12 percent increases once they've gotten a credential, but as high as 47 percent.

The thought of almost doubling your salary in your position, and helping your local employees, and keeping them in our local region is just tremendous for the economic environment.

The thought is these are great affordable programs and it's just a no brainer when it comes to trying to establishing and developing your own workforce.

>> What would be the first step if an employer is listening now and they're thinking,

I had no idea that I could do something specific to my company or to my staff.

Where do they start?

Do they do they go to the website?

Do they reach out to you individually? What is the next step?

>> I think the custom approach of it,

if they're wanting to develop their own program,

Carlene would be a great resource.

She could help sit down with that industry expert,

the content specialist, and trying to figure out what are

those pain points and issues that you're trying to work through.

But if those who are just simply browsing just to get their initial interests,

our website is a good place to go,

lfccworkforce.com/fast, which gives a nice little overview video of the program.

It really it's forward facing for the individuals

that we're trying to recruit and help with that pipeline that they need,

but there's more information we can share once we eventually meet and connect.

Giving us a call, connecting with Carlene would be a great first start.

>> I think that's a great perspective too because a lot of times,

if you're an employer,

you sometimes know the people that you need more so than you

may know necessarily the skill set or what their job is going to be.

So being able to go to the website and see these are the people they're looking for,
those are the people I need,

you can work backwards from there and then reach out and say,

"How do I get these people?

What do I need? What kind of programs do you need to help me put together?"

>> Absolutely. Yes.

>> Any open houses, anything like that come up?

Because I know, normally, you've got something going on.

>> We do have a few things coming up.

Actually, we have a heavy equipment operator open house on April 16th.

There's a few other open house sessions and events that we're going

to be promoting very soon but because

of the local environment right now with the coronavirus, we're not quite sure.

A few events that are happening in the next few weeks,

but stay tuned for those.

But as far as coming out on some of those sessions and events,

we have those in early April and June,

we'll have those announced around the FastForward program.

Take a look at our website and our catalog for the spring and summer,

we'll be featuring some of those events too.

>> We're always happy to come out and meet face-to-face.

Sometimes, it's really meaningful, I think,

to have those conversations and just have employers express to us what their issues are,

what are their pain points?

We understand our program is probably better than anybody could by going through the website, but we can start to match up solutions for them and we have a competency plan that we can go through and map out what it would a level 1? What would level 2? Really help to fashion that career pathway within those organizations.

We're happy to do that.

>> Because sometimes, you don't know what you don't know, and you got to have a starting point to at least get that base knowledge.

>> Right. It's a great way too if you're looking for some mechanism to convert part time to full time employees, to have some succession or some career pathway planned internally, some developmental plan that you can roll out to your employees.

We've done infographics, we've done all sorts of things to even help with those efforts to rally around a company who's looking to upscale their folks and really implement a development plan, internally.

>> What's the website one more time?

>> To find out about FastForward, ifccworkforce.com/fast.

That would be a great first start, or even /corporate to get connected with some of our corporate training programs where Carlene can be in contact with you.

>> Fantastic. Thank you guys for coming.

>> Thank you.

>> I've learned more like I do every single month when you come.

>> Thanks, Janet.

>> I appreciate it.

>> Wonderful.

>> We're going to wrap up today's episode.

We have been in the studio chatting with LFCC Workforce Solutions.

Guy Curtis has been here along with Carlene Hurdle,

she's their corporate training director.

I am heading out this afternoon to record tomorrow's show.

I'm going to be talking with Susan from Nibblins about their Winchester Whipped.

They just had round 1 of their cooking contest,

all the proceeds benefit Fremont Street Nursery.

Round 2 is going to be in a couple of weeks

so she's going to give me all of the details for that.

I hope you will make plans to meet me back here just a few minutes afternoon tomorrow.

I'll have that show all teed up and ready to go.

Guy, Carlene, thank you for coming in.

>> Thank you.

>> Thanks, Janet.

>> We will meet you back here tomorrow

and I totally did not look at my time so now, I have like 10 seconds left.

I'm going to say go sign up for our e-mail,

go over to our Facebook page,

click the sign up button underneath of our cover photo on Facebook,

and get on our e-mail list.

We are sending all kinds of cool e-mails out and

I want to add your name to that list. Meet you back here tomorrow.