

>> Hello. This is Janet Michael.

In addition to hosting the Valley Today,

each week day at noon on The River 95.3,

I also produce podcasts and I'm excited to introduce you to

a new podcast series in partnership with Lord Fairfax Community College.

Having provided higher education and career training for the past half century,

LFCC is tightly interwoven into the fabric

of the Northern Shenandoah Valley and Piedmont regions.

Join me every week for conversations with current and former students to hear

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The role that LFCC has played,

where they are now, and where they plan to go.

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Hello and welcome to The Valley Today I am your host, Janet Michael.

Happy Thursday, as you are listening to the show today, we of course,

have pre-recorded our conversation for LFCC day.

It is LFCC Workforce Solutions this month.

So I am on the screen with Guy Curtis.

Joining him is Jelise Ballon.

She's also with LFCC Workforce.

Guy, we're going to talk leadership,

which I love because that's one of my favorite topics.

I talk with you about leadership.

I talk with Dr. Dave about leadership.

Miles Davis from back in the day and I used to talk about leadership.

When you were on a few months ago,

we were talking about Leadership Institute.

I imagine it's full on underway right now.

>> Yeah, It's going really well.

We have a full cohort that the program kicked off last month.

They'll begin to continue their leadership journey over

the next 11 sessions or so and so till next year.

That's been an awesome program for us for over the years.

Leadership Institute has served over 240 individuals at

this point in its 10th year and over 35 local employers.

So very proud of that program.

It's probably our middle level tier when it comes to leadership development.

Many employers over the years have taken advantage of that program to

help grow the young emerging leaders that they have.

Today, we're excited to continue that leadership discussion.

This is our 2.0, I guess,

version of coming back to the show and sharing new program we've

developed for a lot of the young and emerging leaders who are coming

out of the woodwork because many of our partner employers that we

work with in industry specifically in manufacturing and construction trades.

They're seeing a huge boom of individuals

being thrust into new leadership roles for the first time.

We believe we have the perfect solution for that next step in evolution of those who are leaving their peer-to-peer role now appear to boss situations and being thrust into these new leadership opportunities.

We are excited to announce our leadership base camp program that's going to be starting later in September. I have Jelise on the line today with me to help talk through what the program, all the steps that we took to get it established.

We have an advisory council she still speak to a little bit as well.

Some of that first week, we'll pull this course together to help that local need.

>> Jelise like Guy just said you guys don't just decide, "Hey, we're going to do this program because we always have a waiting list for Leadership Institute. So let's do Leadership Institute Lite."

You really do reach out to the community, you talk to the employers, you figure out what the need is before you put together a program of this magnitude.

>> Yeah, absolutely.

We have a pretty comprehensive scorecard process that we go through. For this program in particular, we had an inkling that there was a need, but the catalyst of this actually stems from a survey that we put out last August and we sent it out to local businesses and our service regions and across Frederick Shenandoah, Fauquier, Rappahannock, Warren, Clarke, and Page counties and of course, Winchester City.

We went out to over 5,000 contact for leaders and these local businesses.

We had over 120 respond and the survey was really to get

a pulse check on how businesses were doing as we were at that time starting,

it looked like we were reaching towards the end of COVID and the shutdown.

Of course we know that, that we had phase 2,

but we were trying to understand how businesses

in our community had been impacted by COVID.

What was their plan for returning to business as usual,

if you will, and also what needs they had to get at that phase.

One of the things that we talked about was where were

their gaps and needs for training and upscaling?

It was really interesting because what we saw emerge to top of the list

was leadership and particularly frontline leadership and communication.

When we broke it down by industry,

it especially emerged when we were

looking at our manufacturing and construction industry.

That first planted the seeds and we started doing

some market research and looking at some of the data and the demand for jobs.

We realized, whereas a lot of other businesses saw

a slow down and an economic downturn during COVID,

the manufacturing businesses in the area saw the opposite, their demand increased.

So they have a strong need to recruit and hire and fill these positions.

We started talking to our local businesses about what was happening.

They said their struggle was that because they were recruiting so many people

that they were having to move people forward and

promote them faster than they would have in the past.

It might have taken a person three years to progress

to a line leader or a team leader role in a manufacturing company.

Now they were getting promoted as quickly as 18 months,  
like brand new on the job.

So they had learned the technical process,  
but not all those leadership skills.

We took all that data,  
we ran it through our scorecard process,  
started looking at it.

Then we really wanted to make sure we were developing something  
that really met the needs of our local business leaders.

Then we invited several of  
our local manufacturing distribution center and  
construction companies to come to campus and be a part of our advisory group.

We gave them light,  
should invite them to come and we had representatives from six different local  
companies,

many of these national brands,  
and we presented to them,

"This is what we're hearing.

This is what we're thinking of putting together. What do you think?"

It was incredibly affirming because they really  
echoed the struggle that they are having to find people with  
these skills to get them upskilled quickly to help  
support them so they can be successful and to really  
retain and invest back into their employees who are  
these very young new leaders who they know the technical skills,  
but they've never had to manage employees or lead a process.

So this was all very new for them.

They really had some really great feedback and insight for us on just how challenging that is and the larger impact it has to their business.

All of that went into putting together and really shaping what this program is now looking like.

>> You bring up a good point that sometimes I think the big misconception out there is being a leader is just about being able to tell people what to do.

That is such a tiny little piece of being a good leader because you have to know how to tell them what to do.

You have to understand all of the different aspects that go into getting the job from point A to point B to point C. If you've only been at a particular company for a year, 18 months, it is hard to understand and navigate and know how to talk to different people in different ways.

This seems like the perfect opportunity for them to be able to train these leaders.

>> Yeah. We have a common phrase we like to say at work is that leaders aren't born.

There are people who innately have some of those skills naturally, but everybody needs some mentoring or training to really become an effective leader.

It's especially difficult transition when you go from working as someone's peer to pivoting to being their supervisor.

That's a tricky situation and so that's a lot of what this covers is how do you make that transition from being a peer or

the buddy or the coworker to now being the supervisor,

the leader, the manager and what are those skills that you need to communicate effectively to troubleshoot problems, to be productive?

That's what this leadership base camp is all about is giving them that starting place. We named it base camp because we like that visual of mountain climbers. They have a starting place where they gather all of their equipment and the core things that they need before they start making their ascent, and that's what we view this as you are really learning those foundational skills and those things you need before you start making your journey and your career and up to your leadership.

>> You say that this is really geared towards or best geared towards manufacturing, construction.

What about other types of industries or maybe smaller businesses that are having the same struggle because they have even less people that they have to figure out how to make work in various positions?

>> Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I think that this program would work for any company.

The reason why we chose to target manufacturing is because what we have found is in the past when we've done leadership training is, you'll get a bunch of folks who are in a manufacturing industry and you give them training that was designed for an office setting, and they know it right away.

It's very frustrating because the challenges that they face are very different than what you have in an office setting.

We wanted to make sure we develop something that really understood that and addressed it because there are very different unique challenges.

But that being said,

I think for anybody,

whether it's financial, health care, small business,

they're going to still take away from that,  
be able to personalize it to, "Oh,  
yeah, that's similar to this challenge that I have."

It absolutely could work for any industry.

>> Let's take a break.

When we come back, can we get in the weeds a little bit about the actual program?

Talk about some of the topics,

how the structure of it works,

how many classes are there and all of that sort of thing in the next segment.

>> Sounds great.

>> We're going to take a quick break. When we come back,

we're going to continue our conversation about leadership base camp.

It is one of the new programs offered at LFCC Workforce Solutions.

Guy Curtis and Jelise Ballon are on the screen chatting with me about it.

We're going to talk more with them when we come back in just a couple of minutes.

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>> Welcome back to the Valley Today.

I am your host Janet Michael.

Happy Thursday as you are listening to the show today.

It is LFCC workforce day.

We are talking about leadership with Guy Curtis and Jelise Ballon,

leadership base camp in particular,

which I think is fantastic as a starting point.

We touched a lot Julie in the first segment on why this program is so important and

all of the background and the research and the feedback

that you put into developing the program.

Let's say I'm an employer of one of these companies that need

somebody to teach my staff how to move up in the process.

What's the first thing that I should do?

What should I know about the weeds part of this program?

>> Sure. Well, we're going to be offering the program in a couple of different ways.

We're going to be picking off our first cohort on September 14th.

If you are a company and you have only two or three people you want to send,

and we would take enrollment with folks from

different companies and put them together very

similar to how we do leadership institutes.

We've also had a number of companies already reach out to us saying, "Look, I've got like 10 or 12 folks, could you come and do this just for our company?"

The answer is yes, absolutely.

We can do that as well and do what we call a custom program so we can do it on-site or host them at campus and schedule it for dates and times that work for them.

But for the cohort,

for folks who are interested in that,

like I said it starts September 14th.

One of the things that we heard loud and clear from our advisory group is that one of the unique challenges for our manufacturers, our distribution centers is, they have shift workers.

They have folks who are going 24 hours a day and that's really challenging when you have folks working a night shift trying to send them to an all-day training.

This training, it's a total of 10 classes and each class is a half-day.

For the first cohort we're running, we're going to do two classes a day.

It'll actually be five different sections that they'll come and it'll meet every other week, starting September 12th for 10 weeks.

Then our second cohort, we're going to kick off in January, will be an evening cohort.

It'll be one class,

one evening a week for 10 weeks.

That way we're trying to accommodate

our companies by offering in a different times that work for them.

The other really cool thing about this program is that we've created it to be even if you're going through it as a cohort member, it's customizable.

What I mean by that is there are six core courses that everyone will take and then there's four electives.

Each person will get a chance to choose what those four additional courses are from a predetermined list.

They can customize their experience and make sure that it's really unique to their industry,

their job role, and who they are as the young leader.

>> That is a really good idea because so many times people will sign up for some of these types of programs and,

I don't want to say they're cookie cutter,

they apply probably 70-80 percent for what they're going to need to know, but that other 20 percent is always just hanging out there.

That is a genius way to be able to make sure they can customize it to the best of their benefit.

>> Yeah, absolutely.

That was echoed by our advisory council as while.

They really love that because some of

our electives are like we have a customer service class,

we've got a computer basics,

even women in leadership.

Not everybody is customer facing.

They wouldn't all need customer services then.

Not everyone needs to be unskilled on their computer skills.

It really is going to allow each person who comes through to get that personal experience.

>> This isn't something necessarily

where I as an employee would reach out to you and say,

"Hey, I would like to sign up."

This is a situation where if I'm listening and I want to take advantage of this,

I should go to my employer or my supervisor and say,

"Hey, I heard about this program on the radio."

Because the ask really needs to start with them, right?

>> Yeah, absolutely. I mean,

certainly we won't turn anyone away who want to come on their own.

But I would definitely encourage folks to start by

talking to their supervisor or their HR department,

and letting them know that they're interested because really ideally,

they want their employer to pay for this because it's a way for

the employer to invest back in them and invest back in the company.

>> This is really affordable on the employer side as well.

>> Yeah, absolutely.

So 1795 for the cohort.

If you want to do the custom training,

we would do custom pricing based on the needs.

That includes lunch for our first cohort since it's an all day class.

It's really, as Guy had said before,

as the foundation of our leadership programs,

not to take away from the value of it,

but it is also the most affordable because we understand

that there's going to be more people at this level that employers need to invest in.

We have this pyramid visual where you have a lot of young leaders at

that baseline and then it moves up to

Leadership Institute is going to be a few less people.

Then our top care program is leadership excellence is even less to

the pricing structure goes up making

this our most affordable leadership program that we offer.

Well, and not to mention if you have someone in that position

now that needs this training and doesn't get it.

The ramifications potentially could be a lot more than just the

1,795 you're spending to send them to

training if they're not doing a good job with the rest of your staff.

Now suddenly you're having people leave

in this employment market that gets a little touchy too,

but seems like it's a win-win all the way around.

Absolutely. You hit the nail on the head, Janet,

because that is what we're hearing from our local employers.

It's a very competitive market right now and manufacturing and they need to find

a way to create and develop healthy teams and invest in long-term employees.

Because if they're just there for the paycheck,

then when the company across the street is offering 10 cents more an hour,

then you're going to lose your folks.

It's only a way for these organizations to home grow a workforce that's going to be

long term and create healthy and diverse teams

that are obviously going to have a great impact for their business.

In previous episodes, when we've talked about how people will stay at a job,

maybe not getting a raise or making less than they might make somewhere else.

If the person they're working for or beside just fills that void for them.

If they love their job and they love who they work for and they love what they're doing,

they'll stay and that all circles back around to leadership.

Yeah, exactly. I would say at our college it's

a great example as far as the leadership that we have,

the teams that we work with,

we have a very core strong leadership that's guiding us and leading us.

If I was not enjoying myself as an employee,

I'd be so quick to leave for the next opportunity,

but never thought about it once because of such strong leadership,

the continued development, that's a given back to the employee,

as well as far as professional development learning opportunities.

We had an amazing professional development session from our HR department just yesterday.

The guy, this great speaker that spoke to us about

strategies and leading themselves and leading others as well too.

It's interesting how the effect that it has

among the employees and the morale of your department,

as well as your entire organization when you have

strong leadership and the support there and development to grow as an individual.

To summon the cost and investment to retain,

is very minimal compared to hiring a whole new staff member all the time,

it takes to retrain them and bring in new leadership as well.

This is a great strategy to reinvest into the staff that

you see as emerging leaders and retain them.

That's one great example to do that.

I love that you guys aren't just talking the talk,

but you're walking the walk and that you're having these same types of professional development things in house for LFCC and LFCC Workforce that you're set telling other employers they should also be offering.

Hey, kudos to you.

Absolutely. The decision yes, it was amazing just the stories and examples and the speaker, it was a Zoom situation but obviously with the COVID thing and being safe.

But yes, they're always reinvesting back into us and certainly within our department and the College President as well.

It's awesome leadership and vision that they see, we're all seeing and support together.

Because they were constantly investing back into their employees.

That was a great example yes for sure.

How does an employer reach out,

is there a website?

Do they send an email?

Do they make a phone call?

Who does all of that get directed to?

Sure we have a great landing page for folks to learn more about Leadership Basecamp it's

[lfccworkforce.com/lb](https://lfccworkforce.com/lb) and coincidental it's LB for Larry Baker,

I know he's on the show as well too.

But Larry is the guy to talk to,

to learn more about how it can be customized through organization or if you're looking to get involved with the cohort starting later in September.

But Larry Baker or visiting our website would be a great place to start.

I would imagine you're going to have a lot of these larger manufacturing firm say, "hey, we want you to come here. "

Because it's just so much easier.

Yeah. The scenario of helping the employer

be and provide training at their location is one delivery method.

I know Larry's got some great examples is where and when he's delivered training it's been all hours, all shifts in years past.

Based on where the employer has that need as soon as they come off their shift or if there are a good breaking point, it can be delivered right there on their place or at a neutral site like our campus source or some other locations.

We get very creative to helping

the employers where their needs are and meet them where they need to be.

Jelise the cohorts that are going to be happening at the campus,

are there are a limited number of spaces available should people be reaching out now,

even though that doesn't start until September 14?

Yeah, that's a great question.

There are a limited number of spaces available,

so we're probably going to have between 15-20 seats available, so it is limited.

But like I said we've plan on running multiple cohorts the years, if it fills out, we'll have a waiting list.

But absolutely, if someone's really interested in this,

I would talk to my manager or HR contacts about this and get in touch with us soon



and we can make sure that you get one of those first seat.

I would guess too, Guy, because I know how good you guys are at customizing these things like what you're talking about going into some of these manufacturing locations.

If there is somebody in the health care field or like Jelise mentioned earlier in an office environment, they can reach out to you and say, hey, we'd like to put together one of these base camps that are a little bit more tailored to us.

You can tweak this program, particularly for them as well.

They shouldn't not reach out because we're talking a little bit more today about manufacturing or construction, right?

Absolutely. Yeah. I think that's one of the neat facets of our corporate training division within our college is that, we're able to deliver a lot of different trainings and scenarios depending on the industry where they are or what the need is and meet them exactly what their needs are.

I think that's one big part of the process of our team reaching out and understanding.

Basically it needs analysis of an employer working with them and what their needs are.

But certainly in the industries are open to these training opportunities and very customizable for their specific needs of where they are.

Ifccworkforce.com/lb for leadership base camp or Larry Baker, you can choose.

Yes exactly.

Well, Guy, Jelise thank you so much for taking some time out of

your day to have this conversation with me. I do appreciate it.

Thank you, Janet, appreciate you for having us.

Thanks, Janet it was fun.

I will be back tomorrow.

Have a brand new episode of

The Valley Today on tap for you just a few minutes afternoon.

Meet me here then.