

Launching the Certified Warehousing and Distribution Specialist Program

The Certified Warehousing and Distribution Specialist program grew from the needs of distribution employers in the Tift County area. The idea germinated at a monthly meeting of a plant managers' roundtable, sponsored by the Tifton-Tift County Chamber of Commerce. Continued workforce training emerged as a major concern.

James Chavez, president of the chamber, approached Quick Start with the businesses' needs and ideas. In partnership with the chamber, Moultrie Technical College, and roundtable members from Target, Heatcraft, Prestolite, and Orgill, Quick Start created the tailored warehousing and distribution certification program to meet those needs. Fourteen employees were certified in the first class, and plans are underway for a new group to begin training in January 2002.



Chavez is excited about the new program. "It's a wonderful opportunity to get people trained and help them get better jobs," he says. "We continually try

to address the needs of employers, and this program is part of our whole economic and workforce development strategy. We focus 80 percent of our time on existing industry;



James Chavez

this is one more tool in the toolbox to help existing businesses and employees."

"It's wonderful for everyone to be able to work in partnership like this and see such good results," says Carol Mathews, vice president for economic development at Moultrie Tech. **QS**

New Program Off to a Great Start

The Certified Warehousing and Distribution Specialist program is a new initiative designed in direct response to what Georgia's businesses and industries requested to retrain incumbent employees and help them remain competitive.

The program helps participants reach new levels of skill and ingenuity in warehousing and distribution and will help develop a better prepared workforce. The first program certification was completed at the Tift Area Campus of Moultrie Technical College this past fall. Fourteen employees of area distribution centers, including Prestolite, Orgill, Target, and Heatcraft, participated in the 20-week course. Students received training in distribution-related topics, such as operations, job functions,

inventory management, and data application, as well as in general business topics, including listening skills, teamwork, positive work ethics, and plant safety.



Greg Phillips

Greg Phillips has seen first-hand the benefits created for two of the companies involved in the inaugural course. He was the plant manager at Heatcraft and now is the general manager at Target's distribution center in Tifton. "The abili-

ty to have local programs that are tailored to fit different business needs is great. It's also an incredible thing for the employees," he says. "This program allows employees who may not have the opportunity for a four-year degree to get advanced training. There is higher morale and a sense of success for the employees."

Phillips believes the broad perspective the program offers is important for employees. "They learn specific skills applicable to their jobs, but also what it takes to run a business. It's a great experience," he says. "People who took the course are wide-eyed and energetic and excited to be here." **QS**