

## OCC helping residents get back to new line of work

By KAREN AUCHTERLONIE Of The Oakland Press

Oakland Community College has revamped its work force development program, shifting the focus from providing training for those who are already employed to training aimed at getting displaced workers back on the job.

"We have the largest work force development program in the State of Michigan among community colleges," said George Cartsonis, spokesman for OCC.

The eight- or 12-week programs are carefully designed to ensure the jobs they provide training for are readily available in the local area. An advisory board creates a job profile and then researches the field, talking to people already working to find out what skills are needed. Some, like the patient care assistant program, are done in conjunction with local businesses that have employment needs in the field.

"To zero in on skills employers say they need is probably most important," said Shelley Kaye, the program manager for short-term training. Before a program is offered, the school makes sure the job pays at least \$12 to \$14 an hour, is in a growing field and that there is a career path, so the entry level wage isn't the top, Kaye said.

Each program costs between \$2,500 and \$3,500, which can be a hardship on someone who has lost their income. However, there are ways to get funding, like from the state's No Worker Left Behind program.

The program started in August and funds are available to the first 100,000 people who apply and qualify through August, 2010. Qualified participants are those who are unemployed, received notice of termination or layoff or any employed person whose family income is \$40,000 or less per year. Recipients of unemployment assistance can still qualify, and Michigan Works! can determine if some of the funds can go toward child care costs.

The program can get participants up to \$5,000 per year for two years for training and schooling, but eligibility is determined only through an orientation and application process offered through Michigan Works! The Michigan Works! Association has local agencies where job seekers can get a variety of services that aim to get them back in the work force and can be contacted by calling (800) 285-9675.

Current programs being offered by OCC are the patient care assistant, facilities maintenance and dental assistant training programs.

An information session about the facilities maintenance program, which will start in March, will be held at 10 a.m. Friday, March 7 in the M-Tec building at the Auburn Hills Campus, 2900 Featherstone Road.

For more information, go online to [www.oaklandcc.edu/wfdev](http://www.oaklandcc.edu/wfdev) or call (248) 232-4182.

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Bruce Karry, of Troy, measures his project for squareness during OCC's Facilities Maintenance program at the Auburn Hills campus.



Oakland Press file photos/VAUGHN GURGANIAN Juana Calero, of Troy, practices shaving a "patient" while O.C.C. Adjunct Nursing Faculty Liz Rodzik (left) and Joanne Tootla (center) look on along with fellow student Brendella McPherson, of Bloomfield Twp. Both Calero and McPherson graduated from the eight-week workforce development program in nursing.