

## Work-Ready Certificates a boon

By [Ching Lee](#)/Appeal-Democrat

As general manager of the Carl's Jr. restaurant in Yuba City, Jim Barber has interviewed his share of teenagers for entry-level jobs.

"Some of them have baby-sat, some of them have cleaned stalls, some of them have done landscaping," he told a group of business men and women at the Yuba-Sutter Chamber of Commerce's monthly Business Connection Breakfast meeting on Friday.

He acknowledged that teenagers may not have much work experience, but they can always be trained on certain skills. What he can't teach them is attitude, so when someone walks in with a Work-Ready Certificate, he said, 99.9 percent of the time, he will hire that person.

"I've hired a few (with Work-Ready Certificates), and I wish I could get more," he said.

Although the Work-Ready Certificate has been around for more than five years and the offices of education in Sutter, Yuba, Colusa, Glenn and Lake counties and the Tri-Counties Regional Occupational Program have been pushing high schools to integrate it into their curriculum, the school-to-career program may still be one of the best-kept secrets in the business community.

That is unfortunate, said Jennifer Godbold, a career adviser for the Sutter County Office of Education, because students who go through the necessary steps to obtain the certificate are much better prepared for the work force.

To complete the program, students must develop a portfolio, which includes their resumes, cover letters, work samples and three letters of recommendation. They are also trained on their interviewing skills and know what potential employers expect from them, said Godbold.

Lack of student participation, however, has always been a concern. In Yuba and Sutter counties, Live Oak High School is the only school where the program has been integrated into the curriculum and seniors are required to complete the program. Of the more than 3,000 students in Yuba City High School, only about 12 of them completed the program this year, said Godbold.

"This year has been really slim," she said of student participation in area high schools. "It's amazing how a lot of people don't know about this program."

Jami Marros, communications director for the Marysville Joint Unified School District, said even though Marysville and Lindhurst high schools have programs that teach students how to write resumes and cover letters, the Work-Ready Certificate "gives students contact with the business community."

She suggested if more employers begin asking teens for their Work-Ready Certificates during interviews, then students will begin to see the value in the program, which would in turn encourage greater participation.

Richard Radcliffe, project director of alternative programs for the Yuba County Office of Education, said the best way to get the program into schools is by the support of the business community.

"We kept it going because it's such a powerful program," Godbold added. "Let's start incorporating this into our schools so that we have quality workers."

Godbold is in the process of planning a job fair for students with Work-Ready Certificates to be held on June 3. Her goal is to provide a teaching tool for students as well as give them a chance to interview with potential employers.

About 50 students from Yuba City and Live Oak high schools probably will participate.

Interested employers who would like to be part of the job fair can contact her at 822-5340.

Appeal-Democrat reporter Ching Lee can be reached at 749-4724. You may e-mail her at [ching\\_lee@link.freedom.com](mailto:ching_lee@link.freedom.com).