



The Academy Times

October 2009

Changing One Life at a Time: Workforce Advantage Academy Enters Sixth-Year

Workforce Advantage Academy began six years ago with a vision to improve the lives of young people in Orange County by offering them opportunities to learn reading, math, science and other academic coursework while holding down a job and developing the life skills necessary to succeed.

“We are the only people in Florida who do what we do—find companies that provide paid internships to high school students,” said Kenneth E. Hartsaw Jr., founder/CEO of Workforce Academy.

“When people enter our school, they begin to turn their lives around,” he added. “We help them get the good life. We give them choices.”

The number of junior and senior high school students attending the charter school has grown from about 100 in 2004 to more than 200 today. More than 400 students have

graduated. Many have joined the military, others enrolled in college and some work full-time in our community.

The Workforce Academy difference

“We let the kids know we care,” said W. Carl Merrell, chief operating officer at the academy. “We develop a culture of respect and focus on the positive.”

With every teacher providing individual attention and showing students they believe in the youngsters, the students start believing in themselves and life’s possibilities.

“Our students excel at their jobs and in school, because we give them the chance to discover and develop their talents,” said Belinda B. Jones, president/principal.

Working in paid internships, the students learn to be self-sufficient, confident adults.

“This is exciting and what charter schools are about, to help innovate and bring a new approach to problems that have persisted in education for decades,” said Florida Commissioner of Education Eric Smith, during a visit to the school. “Connecting classwork to them and their lives and making it meaningful, we are seeing that here. We’re trying to see if there are examples that can be exported to other places in the state.”

Workforce Academy’s certified teachers incorporate business principles in learning plans. With 15 to 20 students in class, the faculty are quick to pick up when a youngster needs more assistance and see that he or she receives it.

“We have to make the learning environment smaller and connect learning to the real world,” said former Education Commissioner John L.



Students packed boxes to ship to Marines serving overseas through the nonprofit Kids in Support of Soldiers program.



Workforce Advantage Academy Enters Sixth-Year, Cont.



Florida Commissioner of Education Eric Smith talked about expanding the Workforce Academy concept. Photo credit Florida Department of Education



Former Commissioner of Education John Winn spoke with students at the academy. Photo credit Florida Department of Education



Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer visited the school and said, "They are doing a marvelous job of uplifting students who haven't been successful in their academic careers and pointing them in the right direction." Photo credit City of Orlando



Trevor Trimble received a Certificate of Congressional Recognition from U.S. Rep. Alan Grayson for his painting called Frenzy.

Winn, in 2006 before he retired. "This school does an outstanding job of combining both of those."

Balance without losing focus

Although students work part-time, Workforce Academy administrators and teachers strive to present the youngsters with a mix of fun activities to create balance in their lives. Annual dances, a prom and special luncheons build excitement and commitment to the program.

Last year, staff and senior students packed into buses and headed to the nation's capital for a week exploring the Smithsonian, Congress and other Washington, D.C., landmarks. It was an opportunity to watch government work and learn about America, while having fun.

This year, the school plans a field trip to New York City, the state capital in Tallahassee and to college campuses.

Students also learn the importance of giving back and community service. The school requires students or their families complete 25 hour of volunteer service during the academic year.

The youngsters sent care packages to U.S. soldiers servicing abroad through the nonprofit Kids in Support of Soldiers (KISS) program. Workforce Academy students collected items, packaged them for shipment overseas, and signed a banner, which flew into battle with the Marine Corps on a SuperCobra helicopter gunship.

College opportunities

Some Workforce Academy students attend the school so they can dual enroll at Valencia Community College and earn college credit at no cost while in high school.

Last year, Workforce Academy gave 10 college-bound students with a good grade point average and a good attitude \$1,000 scholarships. Upping the incentive to do well, Hartsaw vowed during orientation to provide a scholarship to any senior who lives the culture and achieves academic success.

External recognition

While school districts, typically, renew charter school agreements for five years, Orange County Public Schools extended Workforce Academy's right to continue offering its career academy model for 15 years.

"That says the school district acknowledges we are doing what we said we would do, help students find a job, start a career, without neglecting the academics," Hartsaw said.



Workforce Academy headed to Washington, D.C., in 2008. This year, the school plans a New York trip.

Workforce Advantage Academy

Our Mission

Our mission at Workforce Advantage Academy is to create learning environments for high school students, particularly those rising juniors and seniors who desire a different approach to reach their potential. Through attendance at Workforce Academy, our students develop the academic, employment and social skills they need to build rewarding lives and promote positive change in their communities.

Workforce Academy believes that genuine self-esteem comes from academic accomplishments that are recognized and celebrated along with personal fulfillment through strides of independence – being employed, productive citizens.

Our Administrative Team

Kenneth E. Hartsaw, Jr.	Chief Executive Officer
Belinda B. Jones	President/Principal
W. Carl Merrell	Chief Operating Officer

Contact us at: 407-898-7228

Workforce Advantage Academy admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school administered programs.

Hat's Off to Our Business Partners

Jobs make Workforce Advantage Academy's program different than other schools. The school could not exist without its business partners, who provide entry-level employment for approximately 200 students each year.

The academy attempts to match jobs to students' skills and interests, so the young person can start along their desired career path.

Businesses from throughout Orange County have hired Workforce Academy students for service, manufacturing and retail positions. The students earn money and high-school credits as they complete their internships.

The academy continually seeks new partners who can offer opportunities for our students to succeed in the business world.

Workforce Advantage Academy thanks its current and past business partners, companies that have provided a variety of jobs to the school's students.

ABC Fine Wine & Spirits
Abercrombie & Fitch
ADHD Ministries Inc.
Advanced Skincare Center & Spa
AIW
Albertsons
Amazing Pictures
American Ad Specialties
American Pie Pizza Co.
Apenberry's
Arby's
ASG Reprographic
Aquatica
Appleton Creative
Babies"R"US
Bad Dog Driving Range
Barnes & Noble / Waterford Lakes
Baskin-Robbins
Behrle & Associates
Bell, Leeper, and Roper P.A.
Boys & Girls Club of Central Florida
Breakfast Club of Orlando
Broadway Pizza Restaurants
Burger King
Burlington Coat Factory
Calvin Klein
Orlando Tennis Centre
Checkers Drive-in Restaurants
Chick-fil-A
Church Services Associates
Cinemark Festival Bay Mall
Circuit City
Cold Stone Creamery
Colorvision International
Comfort Inn Universal Studios Area
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Disney Floral & Gifts
Dollar Tree
Donatos Pizza
Ecko
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ESQ Computer Solutions

Enhanced Servicing Solutions
Fastening Specialists Inc.
Fazoli's
Firehouse Subs
First Class Dry Cleaners
Florida Dept. of Financial Services, Div. Insurance Fraud
Flying Window Tinters
Fry Hammond Barr
Gap
Gatorland
Glatting, Jackson, Kercher, Anglin Inc.
Glover Signs of Orlando
Goodyear Tires
Gotcha Media
Gotcha Smokehouse Bbq
Great Clips
Great Southern Water Treatment
Haynes & Laurent, P.A.
Health Center of Windermere
HoneyBaked Ham
IHOP
Innovative Service Solutions
IZOD
Jane E. Carey, P.A.
JCPenney
JoAnn Stores
Journeys
Kmart
Little Caesars Pizza
Lockheed Martin
Magical Midway
McDonalds
Donald McGee, DMD
Lockheed Martin
Middleton Lawn and Pest Control
MSCW
Monkey Joes
Newburns Management Group
Optiks Unlimited
Orange County Public Library
Orlando Fire Department
Orlando Health
Orlando Science Center
Panera Bread
Papaya
PDQ Printing
Planet Beach
Planned Parenthood
Play It Again Sports

Power Smoothie Cafe
Popeyes Chicken and Biscuits
Price Chopper
Prospect of Orlando
Orange/Osceola Public Defender's Office
Publix
Quiznos
Regal Cinemas Waterford Lakes
RE/MAX
Repair Resource
Ross Stores
rue21 at Prime Outlets
Savvy Services
SeaWorld Orlando
7-Eleven
Shannon's Casual Café
Simon Property Group, Inc.
Southeast Business Services
Sports Authority
Sports Dominator
Staples
Starbucks
Stein Mart, Inc
Summer Bay Resort
SunCoast Energy
Sunbelt Medical Corp.
Target
TMSI
Trinity Christian Academy
Umansky Law Firm
Universal Orlando
Uno's Chicago Grill
UPS
USA Pro Statistician
Video News
Walgreens
Wal-Mart
Walt Disney World
Washington Mutual
WELBRO Building Corp.
Wendy's
Westwind News & Gifts
Wet 'n Wild
Winn-Dixie
Winter Park Memorial Hospital
W.I.T. Caulking & Restoration Inc.
World Gym
World Of Wireless



Alumnus Helps Kick Off New School Year

What a difference a year can make in the life of a young adult.

Last year at this time, Alex Beightler sat in a classroom at Workforce Advantage Academy listening to community leaders talk about keys for success in the business world. Now, having graduated with good grades, serving as a People to People Citizen Ambassador to Japan, and enrolling in college, Alex returned to the charter school to welcome new students and kick off the 2009-2010 school year.

"This school got me back on track," Alex said. "They helped me focus, and they opened doors for me."

Alex entered the program with hopes small class sizes, individual attention and job prospects could change his outlook and his grades.

"I had gotten lazy in high school," admits Alex, adding that thousands of fellow students competing for teachers' attention made it easy to skip

homework assignments and slide by.

Wise beyond his years, Alex decided that path might not lead to long-term success and decided to spend his senior year at Workforce Advantage Academy. The school's business development team helped him land a job as a collection clerk with the



Alex returned to Workforce Academy as a young man starting his college career.

Orange County Library System.

"I learned customer service and job skills," Alex says.

With personal attention in the classroom, Alex's grades improved. He started earning straight A grades.

"I got to know the teachers and could talk to them," Alex says. "The school is more personal and hands on than my former high school."

Alex learned to value patience and persistence. He never gave up.

With his good grades and newly found confidence, Alex enrolled at Valencia Community College, with plans to pursue a computer engineering degree from the University of Central Florida. He has arranged his community college classes to keep afternoons free, so he can find a part-time job.

Alex assured students entering the academy this year, that if they let it happen, the school will create opportunities that can change their lives for the better.

They will learn responsibility and respect, and discover the satisfaction that comes from receiving a paycheck for work well done, achieving one's goals and learning more about life.

"Workforce helped me make a giant leap," Alex concluded, "And without it, I wouldn't be where I am today."

WAA Walks for the Cure



Teachers and friends of Workforce Advantage Academy have teamed up to participate in the 2009 Central Florida Susan K. Komen Race for the Cure, a 5K run/walk to increase awareness about breast cancer and the importance of early detection and to raise funds for research to fight the disease and to provide education, screening and treatment for uninsured or underinsured women in Central Florida. The race on October 25, 2009, also celebrates survivorship and honors those who died from the disease.

To join the Workforce Advantage Academy team or make a donation, visit <http://centralflorida.info-komen.org>, or talk with Team Captain Marge Sum, 407-898-7228.

We Can't Do It Without You

Workforce Advantage Academy relies on the generosity of our donors to continue providing our students with the best possible education and opportunities for employment and extracurricular activities that ensure a well-rounded high school experience.

Our donors also provide scholarships to students headed to college. In 2009, Workforce Advantage Academy awarded \$1,000 scholarships to 10 youngsters with good grades, who embodied the spirit and culture of Workforce Advantage Academy.

This year, the school would like to offer even more scholarships, money that can make a difference in starting a child off on a college career with fewer financial worries.

Please contact Kenneth E Hartsaw, founder and chief executive officer, at 407-898-7228 to donate to the scholarship fund.

Paid Job Internships Transform Lives

by W. Carl Merrell, chief operating officer

“Your life has just changed for the better.” This statement means that another student at Workforce Advantage Academy has received a job offer that can have positive, life-changing implications.

Ken Hartsaw Jr., school founder and CEO, can be heard making this proclamation to many students during the course of the year. His vision for the academy is to help those students who otherwise might lose the way academically, socially and/or

financially in larger high schools. He has invested many hours developing and cultivating relationships with business partners and in the state education community to make the job offers and graduation a reality. As at other schools of

choice, Workforce Academy offers a unique, personalized learning community that creates opportunities for significant, life-changing activities.

Workforce Advantage Academy is an Orange County Public Charter School with a major focus on graduating from high school and providing students with work experience through paid internship opportunities that prepare them for the world of employment.

Belinda Jones, president/principal of Workforce Advantage Academy, instituted the school’s instructional system and is responsible for student performance. The program combines academics and industry education with a business component, creating a model career academy that complies with the Florida Department of Education Sunshine State Standards for preparing students to effectively engage, communicate and compete globally with students around the world and meet the needs of students, families, businesses and the school district.

Individualized attention and small classes produce significant results. The academy attracts students from throughout the county—as far as Bithlo, Apopka and southern Orange County—because it offers solutions that meet their immediate needs: to earn money and stay in school to graduate. Workforce Academy will find them jobs.

The campus is small and secure. The environment is safe, and a genuine sense of family exists.

Workforce Academy introduces students to different industries that may support their long-term career goals. Creating and maintaining this setting is

critical to the overall success of the program.

Academy staff are creative and innovative in their approach to education and career exploration. When students arrive at the academy, they complete an interest assessment to help them define the kinds of work they may enjoy and a temperament test.

These assessment tools help to develop a career plan that will become a road map to the future and assist academy staff in determining possible internships that would prove beneficial for the student.

Workforce Academy limits its enrollment to 220 students, only half of which are on campus at a time. Two groups of approximately 110 students alternate days. While one cohort takes classes, the other works.

Ninety-minute classes average 15 to 20 students. Schedules are flexible to accommodate the demands of changing situations.

Students work all over Orange County in many different paid internships. They earn at least minimum wage, and some students make \$10 per



Workforce Academy student Stephanie Antoine enjoyed working as a receptionist for deBeaubien, Knight, Simmons, Mantzaris & Neal and was named employee of the month.



C.M. Butler teaches students about how cash flows through a business, using an interactive game that makes learning fun.

hour. The campus bustles with conversations between students and with staff about what is happening on the job, class activities, current events and in their lives. Teachers and administrators constantly help students process life-learning events and help them break the code on this thing called life.

It’s all part of the culture that makes Workforce Academy successful in graduating young people who can compete and excel in the today’s world.

Business Conference Combines Networking and Life Skills

Students began the school year at Workforce Advantage Academy attending a multifocal business conference, filled with keynote guest speakers and breakout sessions—very similar to the conferences business professionals routinely attend—without the evening social activities.

Charles Anderson, PhD, fire marshal for Orange County Public Schools, spoke to the youngsters about overcoming obstacles, such as growing up in a poor neighborhood, the importance of education, and following an internal value system.

“You have to believe in yourself,” Anderson said. “Don’t let anyone stop you from reaching your goal. If you are willing to invest in yourself, people will invest in you.”

Thomas McClary, founder, artist and songwriter for The Commodores, described his path to success and the ins and outs of the music business.

“Every career comes back to the basics of business,” McClary said. “And in every business, it takes a combination of timing, talent, luck and who you know to succeed.”

Army and Navy personnel described career opportunities in the armed forces. J. Natali Schulerbrondt, a transition

services coordinator at Valencia Community College, discussed degree options and answered students questions about community colleges and universities.

During breakout sessions, students participated in a variety of hands-on activities from balancing a checkbook and making change to operating their own paper-airplane businesses—borrowing money, setting prices, and hiring or laying off “workers.”

Courses provide the youngsters with skills they will find helpful in the years ahead and prepare them for a successful future.



Charles Anderson (above), of OCPS, inspires students with his personal story and current success.

Math teacher Mercedes Farfan teaches students how to make change, using realistic faux bills and coins.

Thomas McClary (far right), of the music group The Commodores, plays the hit song Brickhouse during the business conference.



Principal's Corner—The Notepad

Welcome to Workforce Advantage Academy. With the beginning of each new school year, we are all faced with a variety of feelings. Some are elated; while others are sad to see the summer end. Some are anxious to share the highlights of their summer activities and some are eager to just “get the show on the road.” Whatever your feelings, we welcome you to the 2009-2010 school year! It will be a fantastic year!

Students, we want you to keep in mind that high school is about much more than just earning a diploma. High school is also the time to learn about your maturing talents, to pursue your dreams, to explore careers, to discover who you are as well as what you want to become. We encourage you to take advantage of each opportunity that presents itself at Workforce, whether it is new friends, new ventures, anxiety, disappointments, surprises, laughter, successes and accomplishments.

Teachers, we are fortunate to have you, who make the quote by William Arthur Ward a reality: *“The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher*

explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires.” Each and every one of our students will reap the benefits of the great teachers that we have at Workforce. I want to thank you for all of your dedication, commitment and hard work.

I realize that the success of our students and school hinges not only on our superb teachers and staff but also on you – the parents/guardians of our students. Thank you for the wonderful opportunity of working with your students.

The vision of Workforce Advantage Academy could not be realized without the support and dedication of all of our business partners and donors. We could not do this without you. Thank you, thank you, and thank you.

I look forward to working with each of you this school year. Let's work together to make this year, our sixth year, the best year ever!

Always expecting success,
Belinda B. Jones
Principal

Welcome to America



Luis Rioja-Martinez arrived from Spain on August 15 and received a warm welcome from Workforce Advantage Academy students, faculty and administrative officials.

The 16-year-old hopes his experience in the United States during the next year will help him mature. He will live with faculty member Marge Sum while attending the academy.

An avid soccer fan, “football” back in Barcelona, Luis found a team he can play with in Orlando. School officials aim to ensure Rioja-Martinez enjoys a rich experience, with outings to various Florida attractions, such as the beaches. They also view this as an opportunity for him to learn more about America and what life in this county is truly about. A month into the program, Rioja-Martinez says he is enjoying classes and his internship.

Workforce Academy is the first charter school in the state to host a foreign exchange student.

Join Us In Changing Lives

You, too, can play a role in changing young lives and offering them a change to succeed.

- We are constantly seeking out new internship opportunities. If you operate a business, we would love to tell you more about how our students can help meet your employment needs.
- Parents, you can join our Parent-Teachers Association. Become involved in the school.
- Everyone shopping for groceries or office supplies can purchase those items at a store that offers Workforce Academy internships. Buy from businesses that support the academy.
- Donate funds toward a scholarship or an extracurricular activity.

Call today: 407-898-7228

Founder's Corner

by Kenneth E. Hartsaw Jr., Chief Executive Officer



Greetings! We are excited to be beginning our sixth year at Workforce Advantage Academy and look forward to another great year. Graduation rates are high, FCAT is being passed, and students are working around the county.

WAA has some exciting events happening this year to include a spring break field trip to New York City, weekend dances, Grad Bash at Universal Studios, trips to visit colleges, and, of course, the prom. All these activities would not be possible without the generous financial support of our donors.

Our graduating seniors will have numerous options to consider this year: college (scholarships are available), full-time jobs, part time jobs with college, military careers, and vocational/technical institutions. Even in this down-turned economy, jobs are still available for persons with skills. The academy shows our students the career paths needed to obtain these good-paying jobs.

What we want for the students is universal. No matter where you have come from, people share common goals—to have a job they enjoy, a family, money to live well.

We help them achieve that. Workforce Advantage Academy gives them choices and the tools to be successful.

Many thanks to our board of directors, staff, employers, the military branches, parents, generous donors, and our students for a successful past and a very bright future.

Sincerely,
Kenneth E. Hartsaw, Jr.
CEO/Founder

Do you have a news item for us or a story you would like us to share with others? If so, please email the idea to news@workforceadvantageacademy.com.

Workforce Advantage Academy will soon email supplementary news summaries to keep you informed between mailings. If you would like to receive them, please email us at: news@workforceadvantageacademy.com.



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