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## **MSCC Offering Free Training, Testing for Welding Certification**

Mid-South Community College, with grant assistance from the Arkansas Energy Sector Partnership, is providing free evaluation, training, and testing to help area welders earn American Welders Society (AWS) certification.

Welders with AWS credentials are much more likely to be hired than their counterparts without certification, and some projects/companies require the formal documentation of expertise.

“Area employers prefer to hire certified welders because they have demonstrated the skills



necessary to do quality, reliable work,” said Pete Selden, MSCC Workforce Technology Program Specialist. “Some employers demand it, especially those involved in federal contract work because the government requires certified welders. Anyone who works for a contractor being paid through a federal or state grant must have some kind of industry certification.”

MSCC accepts beginners through experienced welders and will train them to the most appropriate level of certification. Everything starts with an evaluation on a virtual welder.

“We assess all of the students using our virtual welder to see where they are,” Selden said. “If they are new to welding, they spend more time on the virtual welder to

learn the muscle memory and positioning. Once they have assessed to a proficient level, they move on to the lab and start the ‘real deal’ welding. We start them out with the basics and direct them toward entry-level certification.”

Students can pursue credentials in a variety of areas.

“We can certify students in stick (electric arc), MIG, TIG, and flux core welding,” Selden said. “We currently have students in all different areas, and the overall training time varies. The maximum is 160 hours for flux core welding.”

In each course, the students have several projects, and each one builds on the skills mastered in previous exercises. Upon completion of the training, students can take the certification test. Grant funds are currently available to pay for all of the instruction, books, and exam fees.

The self-paced classes meet two nights a week: Mondays and Wednesdays or Tuesdays and Thursdays, 5-9 p.m. A group of 29 students began training in January, and several are almost ready to take their tests.

“Our experienced welders who already have an established skill set are moving through the program well,” Selden said. “We’re excited about their progress.”

As program participants earn their certifications, new students will be added to the program. MSCC has funding for about 65 more students to enroll before the end of the calendar year.

“We anticipate that the spots will fill up quickly, so anyone interested in welding certification should contact the College as soon as possible,” Selden said.

In addition to the training, MSCC provides job placement assistance for participants who are unemployed.

“A lot of local companies have shown interest in this program, including SFI in Memphis, Plant Maintenance Services Corp., West Memphis Steel, and Britton Bridge,” Selden said.

While AWS certification opens many doors, it doesn’t automatically guarantee a job.

“Even if you walk through the door with a certification, they’re still going to give you their welding test,” Selden said. “You still have to perform that quality weld as part

of the interview process, and several companies have asked us to let students know that is the expectation.”

Anyone interested in welding training should contact Selden at (870) 733-6019 or [pjselden@midsouthcc.edu](mailto:pjselden@midsouthcc.edu).

For general information about the college, please contact the Admissions Office at (870) 733-6728 or [admissions@midsouthcc.edu](mailto:admissions@midsouthcc.edu), see the college’s website at [www.midsouthcc.edu](http://www.midsouthcc.edu), or visit the campus at 2000 West Broadway in West Memphis.