



Annual Report

For the period

July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025

Submitted By:

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Southwest Alabama Partnership for Training and Employment
Annual Report
For the period
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MISSION

The **Southwest Alabama Partnership for Training and Employment (SWAPTE)** exists to ensure a competitive advantage **FOR EMPLOYERS** through quality people and **FOR PEOPLE** through quality jobs.

VISION

The **Southwest Alabama Partnership for Training and Employment (SWAPTE)** is a regional partnership of business, education, labor, and community leaders that achieves excellence by providing high-quality services that meet the labor market needs of employers and residents in our region of nine counties which include Baldwin, Choctaw, Clarke, Conecuh, Escambia, Mobile, Monroe, Washington, and Wilcox.

2024-2025 Southwest Alabama Partnership for Training and Employment Region 7 Workforce Development Board

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Alabama Community College System

A. State of Alabama's Waivers

1) Allow the use of Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) for in-school youth, ages 16-21 years

The waiver allowing ITA training for in-school youth is demonstrating clear progress toward meeting WIOA performance and employment goals. Continuing this waiver is critical to ensuring in-school youth have access to timely financial support and training opportunities.

Under current state policy, pre-requisite coursework is not eligible for WIOA assistance, which delays support until after students have completed their first or even second semester. The waiver helps bridge this gap. While Pell Grant funds are required to be used first, many students either do not qualify or still face unmet training costs. The waiver ensures these young adults can remain on track with their education and career goals without interruption.

This year, SWAPTE has enrolled three in-school youth in occupational training at approved colleges. One is enrolled in the Registered Nursing program and two are in the Machine Tool Apprenticeship program. All three are currently performing at an average or above-average level academically. These pathways will allow them to enter careers that pay well above the average cost-of-living wage, directly supporting both individual success and the broader state workforce needs.

Additionally, SWAPTE continues to connect high school students through the Road 2 Readiness program, ensuring they are aware of tuition reimbursement opportunities and pathways into occupational skills training.

The waiver is proving effective in providing equitable access, supporting persistence in training, and positioning Alabama's in-school youth for long-term employment success.

B. Customer Satisfaction

Region 7 Workforce Board operates with six (6) full-time Career Centers and three (3) itinerant centers to ensure equitable access to services across the Workforce Region. The itinerant centers, open one day a week, expand services to rural communities where many customers lack reliable internet access. This approach ensures both job seekers and employers in rural areas can access career services, training opportunities, and business resources.

1. Methodologies Used

- **Customer Surveys:** All Career Centers provide participants and employers with customer satisfaction surveys at the point of service, exit, and during employer engagement. Surveys gather feedback on accessibility, quality of service, staff assistance, and overall satisfaction.
- **Virtual and On-Site Feedback:** For clients unable to attend in person due to transportation or scheduling barriers, virtual services are supplemented with survey links. Physical survey forms are available for those without internet access.
- **Event-Based Surveys:** Management implemented a uniform survey tool for use at career fairs and community events to capture broader feedback on outreach effectiveness and identify service gaps.
- **Focus on Both Job Seekers and Employers:** Employers engaged through Career Center staff are asked to provide feedback on timeliness, responsiveness, and the quality of candidate referrals.

2. Customer Satisfaction Outreach

In the past year, Career Centers provided surveys to approximately 9,780 individuals across participants and employers. The response rate was 11%, with higher participation from in-person clients at full-time centers compared to itinerant sites.

Efforts to Improve Response Rate

- Offering multiple ways to respond (paper, electronic, QR codes at centers/events).
- Encouraging completion at point-of-service rather than after exit, when participation tends to decline.
- Expanding uniform surveys to career fairs and itinerant center visits.
- Staff reinforcement — case managers remind participants that their feedback directly improves services.

3. Generalizability of Results

While response rates vary between rural and urban centers, surveys are distributed across all six full-time and three itinerant centers. Because feedback is collected from both job seekers and employers and includes both rural and urban populations, results are considered representative of the customer base as a whole.

4. Continuous Improvement Process

- Survey results are compiled, reviewed by management, and discussed with front-line staff.
- Concerns or negative feedback would be addressed through staff training, process adjustments, or operational changes though this program year the only surveys received with concerns were related to the unemployment EGO Grant staff. These were provided to staff management to address.
- Positive trends are shared with staff to reinforce effective practices and support morale.
- Partnerships with Adult Basic Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, Department of Human Resources, Senior Services, Telamon, and other community agencies further inform continuous improvement by aligning customer needs with referral resources.
- Feedback is also shared with Chief Elected Officials (CEOs) to ensure alignment with local priorities and to integrate community-level insights into service delivery.

Commitment to Customer Responsiveness

Career Centers remain committed to being flexible, responsive, and accessible to all clients—particularly those in rural areas without reliable internet or transportation. While virtual services are available, surveys show that many customers prefer in-person interactions, and Career Center staff adapt to meet those needs. By maintaining a strong feedback loop, actively pursuing input, and making measurable improvements, SWAPTE ensures compliance with 20 CFR 678.800 and maintains a customer-focused one-stop delivery system.

C. Progress Made in Achieving Vision, Goals, Sector Strategies, Career Pathways, Business Engagement

The Region 7 Workforce Development Board/SWAPTE in partnership with the Career Centers continue to make measurable progress toward achieving its vision of providing the leadership and structure necessary to connect business, industry, education, economic development, and community services. By fostering collaboration among these stakeholders, SWAPTE is addressing barriers to employment and strengthening the foundation for long-term economic growth across Region 7.

Region 7, includes nine counties, of which Mobile and Baldwin Counties, are experiencing consistent population and economic growth. With a 2023 unemployment rate of 3.2 percent and a labor force participation rate of 56.4 percent, SWAPTE has prioritized strategies that both expand the talent pipeline and ensure that employers have access to a workforce that supports continued economic expansion.

SWAPTE is actively focused on six targeted industry sectors: Aviation and Aerospace, Advanced Manufacturing, Construction, Healthcare, Hospitality and Tourism, and Maritime. The Alabama Department of Workforce projects that Region 7 will have the highest industry growth rate in the state at 8.18 percent, further underscoring the importance of aligning training and workforce services with industry demand.

To meet these needs, staff regularly participate in industry alliance meetings, collaborate with community colleges, and engage directly with employers to ensure training programs align with current and future workforce requirements. These discussions allow for the development of strategies to overcome hiring

challenges, expand credentialing opportunities, and support jobseekers in accessing high-demand career pathways.

SWAPTE promotes On-the-Job Training (OJT) opportunities at all employer-focused events and actively encourages training providers to inform graduates about its benefits. Community colleges are asked to share OJT information with local employers and encourage them to hire students who have completed or graduated from their programs.

Jobseekers who receive assistance through an Individual Training Account (ITA) are also encouraged to highlight their eligibility for OJT when interviewing, creating an additional incentive for employers to hire them. OJT is further emphasized with businesses engaged through SWAPTE's Work-Based Learning program and has consistently proven to be a strong selling point with employers.

The Alabama Workforce Stabilization Program (AWSP) closed out in June for Region 7. SWAPTE's strong partnerships with Bishop State Community College, Coastal Alabama Community College, and Reid State Technical College, as well as with Alabama Technology Network (ATN) and the Southwest Alabama Workforce Development Council (SAWDC), there were approximately 2,400 participants enrolled with 314 of them being new hires. In addition, there was a total of \$4,164,902.45 allocated to employers within Region 7, of which \$29,712.87 was used strictly for supportive services. These partnerships allow SWAPTE to respond quickly to employer requests, develop new training aligned with industry demand, and create pathways for both new hires and incumbent workers to advance. This approach has been a tremendous success, with more employers reaching out to expand their use of OJT and Incumbent Worker funds as a tool to hire new employees and promote from within their companies.

In pursuit of its goals, SWAPTE continues to work closely with K–12 schools and community organizations to reduce dropout rates and promote career readiness. Staff provide information on funding opportunities and career pathways directly to high school students, ensuring that youth understand and can access various WIOA opportunities. Staff serves on various high school committees and participates in career opportunity days.

Career Centers across the region also offer robust outreach to jobseekers, students, as well as employers. Regular career fairs are held weekly, monthly, and quarterly which connect employers with jobseekers, expanding employment opportunities and raising awareness of available training programs. These events, coupled with community outreach, have helped build stronger pipelines into high-demand occupations while supporting employer recruitment efforts.

SWAPTE continues to encourage the Community Colleges to expand training options for jobseekers through an enhanced Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). By increasing the number and type of programs available, offers participants more flexibility and ensuring that training opportunities match the evolving needs of the regional economy.

By combining OJT and work-based learning initiatives, outreach, employer engagement, training expansion, and collaboration with education partners, SWAPTE is achieving its vision of building a strong and diverse workforce. These efforts are helping individuals move toward self-sufficiency while meeting the labor demands of key industries that drive the economy of Southwest Alabama.

SWAPTE continues to sponsor individuals enrolled at Bishop State Community College through Alabama Power's line worker and HVAC training programs. This year, a total of 17 students met WIOA eligibility requirements, with eight enrolling in HVAC and nine enrolling in the lineman program.

The programs remain highly successful: four participants have successfully three completed HVAC training while five are still enrolled, and six participants have successfully completed the lineman program. Each of these individuals have transitioned or seeking career earning wages well above the average cost of living.

Interest in apprenticeships continues to grow among employers, and SWAPTE is actively reaching out to those with approved programs. Currently, SWAPTE has eight participants enrolled in nursing and machinist apprenticeships, and this number is expected to increase in the future.

Monitoring WIOA programs continues to be done at bi-weekly staff meetings with SWAPTE management staff and the Career Center Area Manager. We have seen that by doing this, it has increased our performance and allows for any issues to be addressed and settled before it affects performance negatively. SWAPTE is proud to have met and exceeded performance this year and this is all because of the work that our case managers dedicate to their participants.

SWAPTE remains fully dedicated to the implementation of the Pathway Home 5 grant, ReEntry 2 Work. This initiative has provided valuable lessons and insights, particularly regarding the challenges associated with enrollments and administrative transitions.

One of the primary challenges has been the enrollment requirement of a confirmed release date. Staff have found that the majority of individuals incarcerated in the jail have not yet been sentenced with a set release date, which has limited the number of participants eligible for enrollment. To address this issue, SWAPTE has facilitated multiple meetings with District Attorneys, Public Defenders, and Probate Judges to identify potential solutions and explore opportunities for streamlining this process.

Despite these enrollment challenges, partnerships have been a significant success of the program. The Sheriff and Warden have been extremely supportive, allowing computers to be placed in a designated training area so inmates can complete online training courses. Staff have also worked closely with partner agencies to clearly define each organization's role in providing supportive services that help individuals overcome barriers both during incarceration and upon release.

Employer engagement has also been a focus. SWAPTE staff have initiated discussions with employers to address concerns about hiring returning citizens and building pathways into sustainable employment. These conversations have opened doors for future placements and are helping to reduce stigma while emphasizing the value of a skilled workforce.

Although enrollments have been limited in the first year due to structural barriers, the groundwork laid through partnerships, planning, and employer outreach is expected to produce long-term success. With systems now in place and relationships strengthened, SWAPTE anticipates that ReEntry 2 Work will gain momentum and achieve its goal of preparing returning citizens for successful reentry into the workforce.

SWAPTE received an incentive grant to assist 25 foster care participants in overcoming barriers to self-sufficiency as they transition out of the foster care system. To implement this program, SWAPTE partnered with Lifelines Counseling Services, which identified the Department of Human Resources (DHR) as the referral source for participants.

The partnership with DHR presented challenges, as staff were resistant to referring clients, sharing information, and ensuring follow-through, despite multiple meetings to improve the process. Even with these obstacles, Lifelines has successfully enrolled 14 students into the program.

The services provided by Lifelines have been extremely beneficial to participants and include:

- Financial literacy and budgeting skills to build long-term stability
- Work experience opportunities that support work readiness
- Supportive services to address immediate barriers to education and employment
- Assistance with the postsecondary application process to increase credential attainment
- Career exploration and planning aligned with high-demand industry sectors
- Wraparound supports tailored to help youth transition successfully to independence

While the original intent was to expand this program into Baldwin and Clarke counties, the current funding allocation will end on December 31, 2025. It is SWAPTE's intent to seek funding in the next program year to continue and expand these critical services to foster youth transitioning into adulthood.

By addressing both the educational and employment barriers faced by these young adults, SWAPTE and Lifelines are helping participants not only succeed in the short term but also achieve lasting self-sufficiency while strengthening the regional workforce.

D. Sector Strategies/Career Pathways

SWAPTE's overall strategy to work with partners that carry out the core programs focuses on the alignment of resources and services to create a coordinated and effective workforce system. Staff serve on committees with educators and other business partners, in which the primary focus is working with secondary schools to identify career pathways that connect seamlessly with post-secondary opportunities in high-demand industries. This includes linking apprenticeship opportunities with career and technical education (CTE) curriculum, allowing students to progress more quickly toward journeyman status and long-term career advancement.

SWAPTE continues to strategize in identifying industries with aging workforces, emerging skill needs, and growing labor demand. By partnering with regional community colleges, SWAPTE has supported the development of training programs that address these critical workforce gaps. These partnerships ensure that educational opportunities align directly with the needs of employers, particularly in the six targeted sectors: aviation and aerospace, advanced manufacturing, construction, healthcare, hospitality and tourism, and maritime. The Community Colleges in Region 7 are fully onboard with revamping courses and creating training that meets employer needs.

To advance sector strategies and career pathways, SWAPTE staff along with Career Center staff regularly convenes with the Regional Workforce Board, industry leaders, and community colleges to discuss workforce challenges and develop targeted solutions. Staff also participate on numerous committees and boards across the region to share available resources, promote workforce initiatives, and elevate the barriers that jobseekers face.

One important area of progress that has continued is working with employers to improve job postings and hiring requirements. Many employers initially listed degree requirements for jobs that did not truly require

them. By encouraging employers to reassess and update job descriptions, has helped expand the pool of qualified applicants, ensuring more individuals have equitable access to employment opportunities.

SWAPTE emphasizes the braiding of funding streams to better serve both businesses and jobseekers. Programs regularly shared with employers and community partners include:

- ❖ Apprenticeship Programs
- ❖ Incumbent Worker Training
- ❖ On-the-Job Training (OJT)
- ❖ Individual Training Accounts (ITA)
- ❖ Youth Programs
- ❖ Out-of-School Work-Based Learning (WBL)
- ❖ Road 2 Readiness (In-School Summer Program)

By combining these resources, SWAPTE can create customized solutions that maximize both employer participation and participant success. In addition, support is given to the youth providers to encourage their youth to continue their career pathway by enrolling in training opportunities that are offered.

Employer interest in SWAPTE's programs continues to grow, with many positive experiences and sharing outcomes with peer businesses. A particular success has been the Work-Based Learning (WBL) program, which allows young adults to gain up to 90 days of work experience and an inside look at employer expectations. For many rural counties, this program has been a critical entry point into long-term employment. Approximately 51 young adults participated in this program in our rural counties with an approximate 80% completion rate.

When an employer chooses to hire a participant after their WBL experience, SWAPTE can transition the placement into an On-the-Job Training contract, reimbursing the employer for 50% of the participant's wages during training. This has proven to be a highly effective strategy for encouraging employers to take a chance on new workers while reducing the risk associated with onboarding. Several employers have taken advantage of this and have had great success with building their workforce.

SWAPTE has partnered with Austal and their staffing company to provide OJT opportunities for new full-time employees with benefits. The staffing company integrates training tailored to Navy contract requirements, offering one-on-one support in areas such as shipbuilding and welding. This approach allows employees to strengthen their skills while remaining employed and earning high wages. The partnership not only supports Austal's need to expand its workforce to meet Navy contract demands but also excites participants about career opportunities in the region's shipbuilding industry.

SWAPTE successfully closed out the Alabama Workforce Stabilization Program (AWSP) Grant, enrolling 2,400 participants, including 314 new hires who completed 225 hours of On-the-Job Training. Employers were reimbursed \$4.16 million, with an additional \$29,712 provided in supportive services. The grant demonstrated strong collaboration among SWAPTE, Career Center staff, Community Colleges, and the Alabama Technology Network, serving diverse industries across Region 7 such as health care, hospitality, aviation, advanced manufacturing, and IT. Despite some delays in reimbursements, employers expressed appreciation for the program's impact and outcomes.

Through their participation in the AWSP, employers have gained greater awareness of Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) opportunities. SWAPTE continues to partner with employers interested in upskilling their

current workforce, working with four employers under the IWT program this year. Funds are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis, and interest in this resource continues to grow as employers invest more in strengthening their workforce.

The Road 2 Readiness summer employment program for 11th and 12th graders continues to grow, giving valuable exposure to local industries while earning \$13.50 per hour. The program is especially successful in rural areas, while Mobile and Bay Minette face enrollment challenges. Mobile strengthened participation by partnering with the City's Parks and Recreation program, while Baldwin is working with local schools but still struggles to engage students. Despite these challenges, approximately 80 youth enrolled, with more than 70 successfully completing the program.

E. Apprenticeship Efforts

Apprenticeships remain a top priority with the current administration, and more employers are inquiring about registering their programs with the Alabama Office of Apprenticeship. SWAPTE finds that while many employers already have "apprenticeship-style" programs, they are not formally registered due to concerns about the amount of "red tape." SWAPTE continues to encourage registration, explaining the funding opportunities available and connecting employers with staff who can assist.

In 2024–2025, SWAPTE enrolled 8 new participants in healthcare and machinist programs. A common challenge has been the disconnect between employers registering with the Office of Apprenticeship but not appearing on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). To address this, SWAPTE now prioritizes ensuring programs are added to the ETPL at the start of the process with the help of the quick response from Workforce Development Division staff.

SWAPTE actively participates in meetings with employers and K-12 administrators to ensure CTE students are aware of apprenticeship opportunities. Youth funding has been used to place students into apprenticeship programs, and outreach efforts continue to expand awareness among both employers and youth.

Additionally, SWAPTE has coordinated with community colleges to obtain apprenticeship information and sent letters to employers to inform them of available funding opportunities. These steps are helping increase awareness and participation, and SWAPTE anticipates stronger results in the coming year.

F. Discussions:

1. Promising Practices

SWAPTE has built strong partnerships with Community Colleges and the Alabama Technology Network (ATN), collaborating directly with employers to design training that meets industry needs. For example, Bishop State revamped its welding program based on employer feedback in the maritime industry, resulting in higher-quality training and more job-ready participants. Coastal Community College and Reid State Community College also respond quickly to employer needs, creating specialized training for companies like Novelis and the Navy. ATN remains a critical partner, delivering customized training to employers such as Outokumpu and others across Region 7.

Beyond training, SWAPTE and Career Center staff work daily with employers to provide job announcements, coordinate career fairs, and facilitate meetings with education partners. Members of our Workforce Board play a vital role in shaping these efforts and supporting community engagement.

SWAPTE also highlights success stories directly from participants and employers, sharing them in our monthly newsletters, and often with the State and Federal Government when requested. We continue to find that stories from individuals are much more powerful than coming from the agency.

In the community, SWAPTE actively participates on the Mobile Chamber Workforce Alliance Board, alongside higher education institutions, school systems, ATN, employers, and community organizations. These monthly meetings focus on addressing workforce challenges, sharing best practices, and strengthening regional collaboration.

In addition, SWAPTE and Career Center staff are consistently engaged in local events and outreach efforts. Staff regularly participate in community functions, such as events in parks and other public spaces, to provide information and support. They also partner with high schools and colleges by participating in Career Days and visiting training classes to share details about funding opportunities and Career Center services available to participants.

At the individual level, Career Center staff provide personalized case management throughout enrollment and follow-up, actively connecting job seekers to opportunities and helping them overcome barriers. Staff work to build participant confidence, offer encouragement, and provide guidance as they progress along their career path. They also visit worksites, celebrate achievements with photos, and reinforce positive progress.

SWAPTE recognizes that its customers are the reason for workforce development efforts and will continue to uphold and expand these best practices.

2. Lessons Learned

Despite consistent outreach, many employers and community members remain unaware of the full range of services available. This highlights the importance of maintaining a visible presence at partner meetings and community events. Strengthening collaboration within Career Centers ensures that partner agencies understand each other's services, leading to more coordinated support for employers and better alignment with workforce needs. These efforts have contributed to increased employer participation in programs such as On-the-Job Training (OJT), apprenticeships, and incumbent worker training.

Case managers have learned the critical value of timely follow-up with participants who are not employed. Engaging participants have improved re-engagement rates and reduced gaps in service, resulting in higher placement and retention outcomes. Cross-training staff on all programs ensure participants receive accurate guidance and access to all available funding and training opportunities, which helps remove barriers to employment and support long-term career success.

Workforce development is dynamic, and staff must remain adaptable and proactive. Daily morning meetings keep staff informed about job opportunities, community events, and office safety, which improves coordination and service delivery. As a result, customers consistently receive responsive, well-informed support, increasing satisfaction, engagement, and overall successful outcomes in employment, training completion, and career progression.

3. Success Stories

SWAPTE requests staff to submit success stories each month from both employers and participants. These stories are published in our monthly SWAPTE Newsletter. We find that this is a positive way to let our partners along with our board members see what is happening in Region 7. Often, staff tend to forget to send these in, as they consider the success of the participants part of their daily duties, so we provide reminders of this important information.



From left to right: Deon M., Principal Vernita L., Juantarious C., WBL participant, and Sidney W. Mr. Carter worked on the OSY Youth WBL Program

Juantarious C., a 19-year-old, worked on our OSY WBL Program as a custodian at J.E. Hobbs Elementary School in Camden, AL. After completing the program, Juantarious was hired on full-time as a custodian with Wilcox County Board of Education, Camden, AL. He is working at Wilcox Central High School.



Have you ever been indecisive about your career path? I always have been! I'll have a plan and a couple of ideas, but don't know where to start. When you think of life, you think of ways to make it through or find ways to make it better.

As an employee of USA Health, I was recently offered the opportunity to participate in "upskill training" through their Workforce Development unit, which was being funded by SWAPTE's Alabama Workforce Stabilization Program (AWSP). Not knowing what Workforce Development actually was, I took a leap of faith. I enrolled to become a Patient Care Assistant, a position I knew nothing about, which turned out to be the greatest decision for me... a stepping stone that will open even more doors for my future. I am now officially a Patient Care Assistant at USA Health!

Workforce Development is truly a way to create a new start in your life! I am so glad I decided to participate in the training. I now tell family, friends, and coworkers about my experience and the other programs that are offered.

Angel English
PATIENT CARE ASSISTANT
USA Health
June 2024

USA HEALTH

BISHOP STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE



The Apprentices

SWAPTE participants attend Signing Day at Bishop State to begin classes and work at Industrial Valve's Machine Tool Technology Apprenticeship program

—APPRENTICES—
Demetres Robinson (left) • Justin Huber (right)



COLLEGE OF NURSING

JAQUILE WILSON

...became a Registered Nurse after completion of training through University of South Alabama Medical Center's nursing program. Wilson enrolled in the program in order to receive financial assistance via SWAPTE's

"The quality of service with SWAPTE was top tier. Case Manager Carla Andrews with a smile and care, presented me with indept steps on what I needed to do."

"Thanks to the training, I am officially a Registered Nurse. My hopes is to start on my stepdown unit and get my bachelor's degree."

—Jaquile Wilson



Josaphene Thompson

My dad pulled me out of school in the sixth grade and put me in a private school. However, the school wasn't focused on our education. When I was eventually put back in public school, I struggled. Having to support myself financially, I knew I couldn't work and go to school, I dropped out and ended up getting a job at Walmart. I'm pretty sure I was only 16 at that point.

Due to family issues, I was forced to move again into my boyfriend's parents' place. His mom really pushed me to get my GED. This is when I enrolled in Adult Education classes at Goodwill Gulf Coast and the YES program.

While in the process of working on my GED, I started working at Publix. When I passed the GED, I was promoted and given a significant pay increase! I am currently in the process of starting college to get a degree in business management. With my degree, I'm hoping to become a Customer Service Manager or Ccustomer Service Team Lead at my current job.

I came to Goodwill to get help with my GED, but I got so much more. Not only did they help me with my GED, I was able to receive gift cards for each part of the GED I passed through the YES Program. Ms. Michelle was there with me every step of the way. She was very encouraging and often said how smart I was. I proved her right by passing that GED test! Now I am working full-time in a job that I enjoy. I plan to attend Coastal Alabama Community College and major in Business Management.

My future is looking brighter and brighter. Thank you, Goodwill Gulf Coast and the YES Program!





The training classes, funded by SWAPTE's Alabama Workforce Stabilization Program (AWSP) was a help the company in that it allowed our employees to increase their understanding and training of the Marine Air Conditioning and Refrigeration Systems. This allowed for increased efficiency in diagnosis and repairs. It also allows for a decrease in labor hours which results in a cheaper bill for the customer. A lower cost to the customer, makes a satisfied customer who in turn, becomes a "repeat customer."

Training also benefits the employee financially as they become more efficient in their work and diagnostics by allowing them to gain an increase in pay.

— Conner Jung, President —



Ke'ron W. earned his CDL while enrolled with Reid State Youth Provider

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA COLLEGE OF NURSING

Makiyah Bright
REGISTERED NURSE
Mobile Infirmary Hospital

I learned about the WIOA program through a family member. After SWAPTE Case Manager Carla Andrews informed me of the requirements and benefits of the program, I enrolled because I was seeking financial assistance for school.

My training experience throughout the program was amazing! Through emails, phone calls and office visits, the staff guided me the entire time. This allowed me to never feel as if I was going through the process alone.

Training has definitely made a huge impact on my life. Because of this program, I was able to successfully complete my Bachelor's of Science in Nursing degree and pass my NCLEX on the first try.

My hope for the future includes furthering my nursing career and education.

Mount Vernon Police Department MOUNT VERNON, ALABAMA

Veteran Newman Brazier

In 2021, Brazier visited Alabama Career Center in Mobile where On-the-Job Training (OJT) Business Services Coordinator Stephanie Shepard-Oaks reached out to sources in the Town of Mount Vernon. They were interested in an (OJT) opportunity for Brazier.

Deemed eligible for OJT, Brazier was hired as a Mt. Vernon Police Officer. He enjoys the small community of Mt. Vernon and knows everyone on a first name basis.

In July 2024, Brazier was promoted to Sergeant. He now supervises the performance of police personnel; is responsible for over-seeing, organizing, training and directing the activities of assigned law enforcement personnel.

MUCH SUCCESS SARGEANT BRAZIER!



Aquan Warner

Alex Parfait

For more than three years, Aquan and Alex has shown themselves to be good, reliable employees and have become a stable part of Solaro's production team. Utilizing SWAPTE's WIOA program has proven to be a worthy investment for Solaro!

– Emilia Grubb, CFO/Solaro Energy Inc –

BISHOP STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE



The Graduates

SWAPTE had three(3) participants to successfully complete training through Bishop State's HVAC Fast Track program in partnership with Alabama Power

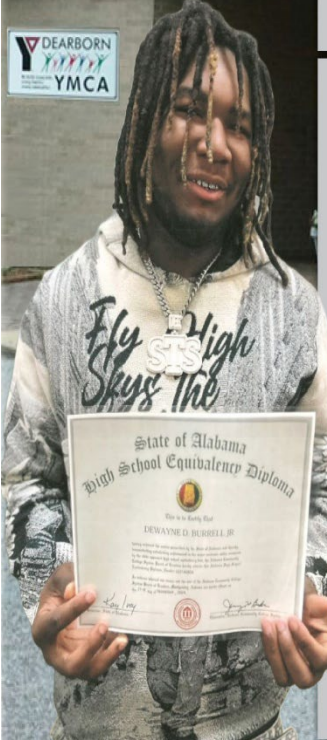
-GRADUATES-

Brian ~~Nobles~~ (left) • Jaylen ~~Powell~~ (right) • Darius ~~Cutler~~ (not pictured)





DEARBORN STREET C



DeWayne Burrell Jr.

I enrolled in the Dearborn YMCA Pathway to Employment GED Program because I wanted High School credentials.

My experience with Pathway has been very good and helpful. The teachers were patient with me, the case manager helped to motivate me to stay focus and to remember why I started the program.

Thus far I have achieved a number of things...
Joined a Union; Obtained skills in construction, plumbing and welding; Got a license to buy and sale cars!

I am currently employed with Elite Residential, a family owned business.

Pathway has truly had a positive impact on my life! It made me feel better as a person.

My next goal... THE UNITED STATES ARMY!




CONTINUED SUCCESS DEWAYNE!

Striving for Excellence – Soaring with SUCCESS



LVER Brendlyn ~~Newman~~ • Veteran ~~Robert~~ Woodson • Business Service Coordinator Stephanie ~~Newman~~

U.S. Air Force Veteran ~~Robert~~ Woodson (employed and justice-involved) visited Alabama Career Center in Mobile, seeking opportunity for employment as a Diesel Mechanic. After initial assessment with Career Center Employment Security Manager Terrence ~~Brown~~, Woodson meet with Veterans' Service Specialist LVER Brendlyn ~~Newman~~.

~~Newman~~ reached out to Tire Tech Inc. (a local, 24-year business), shared Woodson's resume and requested an interview for their Diesel Mechanic position. Tire Tech then expressed interest in SWAPTE's On-the-Job Training (OJT) program and was connected with SWAPTE's Business Service Coordinator Stephanie ~~Newman~~.

Veteran ~~Robert~~ Woodson, having met OJT eligibility, was hired in September by Tire Tech as a Diesel Mechanic.





G. Challenges

SWAPTE staff continue to face challenges related to workforce engagement and WIOA program implementation. One ongoing issue is the lack of clarity regarding where performance is measured in AlabamaWorks!. Staff are often uncertain about which data fields drive performance outcomes, resulting in duplicate entry of the same information across multiple areas of the system. Because information does not automatically carry over, staff must spend additional time ensuring data is entered correctly, which can impact accuracy as well as efficiency.

The Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) also presents difficulties. Providers do not consistently keep their information current, and programs sometimes disappear from the list without staff receiving notice. This becomes discouraging when working with participants who are ready to be issued a training voucher, only to discover the program is no longer listed. Staff remain in regular communication with the Workforce Division to determine which programs need updating and then reach out to providers; however, this process often causes further confusion, as staff are sometimes uncertain about next steps and must redirect providers back to the Workforce Division for clarification.

Employer engagement continues to be a challenge as well. Many employers do not move quickly enough in their hiring processes, resulting in lost opportunities for participants. In other cases, employers advertise a large number of job openings but hire only a small fraction of what was initially projected. While SWAPTE actively attends meetings, serves on committees, and promotes services and funding available through the Career Centers, it often takes multiple meetings for employers to fully understand and appreciate the benefits available to them.

Youth in Region 7, including those completing CTE courses in high school, often graduate without a clear sense of their career goals. Many young people visit the Career Center with little direction on where to begin their job search. Staff continue working to close this gap by participating in community events, attending school career days, and providing resources through word of mouth.

Barriers such as limited internet access and transportation remain obstacles for many clients. Career Centers provide an important resource for those who need internet access to complete essential tasks. In Mobile, the MoGo transportation program has been a major success, offering affordable rides to employment locations and expanding its service area. SWAPTE is hopeful that MoGo will continue to grow beyond its current focus in Mobile and eventually expand throughout the region, helping more individuals overcome transportation barriers to employment.

Policies and procedures for Region 7 have been updated, or are in the process of being updated, so that staff will have them readily available for reference. Technical assistance is provided to all youth providers at the time their contracts are awarded and continues throughout the year as needed. Staff frequently meet with providers one-on-one to offer individualized support.

Technical assistance and refresher training from the Workforce Division are always welcomed by SWAPTE. Staff turnover, along with uncertainty or second-guessing, often creates a need for additional training, which helps maintain consistency and compliance across all programs.

One of the most significant challenges has been the transition between the Alabama Department of Labor and the Alabama Department of Commerce. Field staff have expressed concerns about the lack of communication and limited information they have received during this transition. Similarly, SWAPTE staff have faced

difficulties in requesting information, as it has not always been clear who to contact or where to send required documents.

The redevelopment of the workforce board has presented additional challenges, particularly related to the items requested and the manner in which deadlines were set. Completing all requirements under these circumstances has been difficult and continues to place additional strain on staff capacity.