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# Graduation Center Students Become Work-Ready Certified

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Over a dozen students graduated and two scholarships were awarded during the Gateway 2 Jobs commencement on Wednesday, Oct. 25, at Poplar Bluff High School.

Founded by the Poplar Bluff Chamber of Commerce, the program gives students at the Graduation Center an opportunity to learn insider tips from local industry professionals about gaining employment. Business leaders visited the class throughout the month to share about topics such as resume writing and job interviewing.

“We are blessed in this community to have folks who could be sitting in the office making more money but take the time out of their day because they care about these kids getting a job in the workforce,” said Steve Halter, chamber president.

The program began seven years ago as the brainchild of Halter and businesswoman Sharon Kissinger of Kissinger & Kirkman Investment Centre, who felt there was a need for a work-readiness program, and have a soft spot for students working on credit recovery due to various life circumstances.

In addition to participating in a series of lectures in order to earn certificates of completion, students had to complete volunteer work in the community, maintain a GPA above passing and have no discipline referrals.

“Finish what you start, take some risks, have a plan but be willing to adjust, dream big and put steps in place to achieve those goals,” advised regional director Jomo Castro of AT&T Missouri, which was one of several business sponsors. The contacts that students made throughout the course of the program will continue to be resources for them in the community, Castro noted.

Kissinger, along with the Three Rivers Endowment Trust, awarded students Michaela Swift and Jerry Faughn with \$500 scholarships respectively to the community college based on essays submitted. Mayor Ed DeGaris was present for the ceremony to personally congratulate the graduates.

Pictured are students display their certificates with program supporters. Graduates were (in alphabetical order) Richard Anderson, Brian Battles, Kyle Blanchard, Jordan Brown, Dakota Carlton, Jerry Faughn, Krista Johnson, Corey Lashley, Laquarious Marshall, Floyd Ray, Michael Simpson and Deamario Thomas. Not present was Michaela Swift.

Article and photo submitted by Tim Krakowiak, Communications/Marketing Director, Poplar Bluff R-I School District

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