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## PRESS RELEASE

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Photos of the event can be found on [Facebook](#) or in [this folder](#).

## **“Apprenticeships Make Colorado Stronger” — Business Experiential-Learning Commission and Lt. Gov. Primavera Honor Apprenticeship Advocates in “Celebration of Excellence” Award Ceremony**

*During its “Celebration of Excellence” event, the Business Experiential-Learning Commission honored the achievements of apprentices and celebrated businesses, mentors, and programs committed to increasing awareness and adoption of apprenticeships.*

(Denver) -- Last night at the Governor’s Residence at Boettcher Mansion, the Business Experiential-Learning (BEL) Commission honored six apprentices, three mentors, and five employers who have worked to further the awareness and adoption of apprenticeship programs, widely recognized to be an effective way to gain in-demand skills while earning a paycheck in a rapidly changing economy.

The event, sponsored by CareerWise Colorado and FirstBank, was made possible by the governor-appointed BEL Commission, partners from the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, the Colorado Workforce Development Council, the Colorado Community College System, the Colorado Department of Higher Education, CareerWise Colorado, and representatives from business and industry. ([For a full list of BEL Commission members, click here.](#))

Colorado Lieutenant Governor Dianne Primavera attended the event, where she took photos with the award recipients, described the benefits of apprenticeship programs, and highlighted what the Polis administration has accomplished in workforce development. Titled “Celebration of Excellence: Colorado Apprenticeship Awards,” the event closely follows Governor Jared Polis’ [proclamation](#) of November as Colorado Apprenticeship Month.

Spanning a wide range of industries, apprenticeships have been shown to benefit both workers and employers

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Workers earn a paycheck while learning skills that help them remain competitive in a rapidly changing economy as employers gain skilled talent who have received customized training tailored to specific business needs. According to the [US Department of Labor](#), apprenticeships also benefit employers by increasing retention and safety.

Noel Ginsburg, Chair of the BEL Commission and CEO of CareerWise Colorado, noted that Colorado's adoption of an approach to apprenticeship programs are widely respected outside of the state: "Colorado's commitment to innovating the ways our communities can come together to make more opportunity for more people a reality is unmatched. That commitment is not only recognized here in the state, but around the country and around the world," he said. "The stories of apprenticeship we heard this evening are some of the finest examples of apprenticeships anywhere."

Joe Barela, Executive Director of CDLE, echoed the sentiment: "As we prepare Coloradans for today and tomorrow's economy, we need to elevate all paths to success. Apprenticeships give workers the in-demand skills they need to flourish in good jobs and help employers fill their skills gaps, improve retention, and increase diversity. Tonight's awardees illustrate how these programs make Colorado stronger."

Educators are particularly engaged in promoting apprenticeship programs. Thanks to a [recent \\$12 million grant](#) from the U.S. Department of Labor, the Colorado Department of Higher Education is partnering with the Colorado Community College System to create 5,000 apprenticeships in the healthcare field. Healthcare partners include Kaiser Permanente, Centura Health, Healthone/HCA, UCHealth, and Colorado Rural Health Center. Three of the five employer award recipients have created healthcare apprenticeships in partnership with the two agencies.

Joe Garcia, Chancellor of the Colorado Community College System pointed out that community colleges have a unique role to play in today's economy: "They are changing the way students learn, connect, and experience on-the-job training. We are thrilled to see award recipients in each of the categories and several of our colleges in partnership with leading employers, paving the way for thousands of students to better compete in Colorado's evolving workforce."

"Apprenticeships bridge education to opportunity, whether students choose to go directly into the workforce or continue their education at a Colorado college or university," said Angie Paccione, Ph.D., Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Higher Education. "That's why, in partnership with the Colorado Community College System, we are excited to create up to 5,000 apprenticeships in our booming healthcare industry. The apprenticeships will transform how healthcare providers recruit the talent needed to serve our state. And for apprentices, this opportunity will provide a living wage, college credit and a lifelong career pathway in a growing and rewarding industry."

Lee Wheeler-Berliner, Managing Director of the Colorado Workforce Development Council also emphasized how apprenticeships serve Colorado's economy: "Apprenticeships have emerged as a common thread in our diverse state that can equip Coloradans and employers to meet their workforce needs now and in the future. We are proud to honor many of the individuals and organizations working hard each day to further the apprenticeship model and open doors of opportunity."

Photos of the event can be found on [Facebook](#) or in [this folder](#).

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## About the Business Experiential-Learning (BEL) Commission

The Business Experiential-Learning (BEL) Commission was created in 2015 by then-Governor Hickenlooper to develop systemic solutions, including pursuing public-private partnerships that integrate work-based education and training to meet the needs of Colorado's economy. Successes like the ones recognized during "Celebration of Excellence" are a result of the collective work of all of the BEL Commission partners and are evidence of Colorado's innovation and leadership in work-based learning strategies.

### Awardees include:

#### Apprentices

***Eric Miller** is a third year apprentice at Pinnacol Assurance and a graduate of the Denver School of Innovation and Sustainable Design. His coworkers commended him on his enthusiasm and his willingness to help others, especially with technology. During his apprenticeship, he has automated a reporting process, which now takes five minutes instead of a week.*

***Aujanique Porter** is also an apprentice at Pinnacol Assurance, which she found through CareerWise Colorado. As an integral part of the Agency Relations team, Aujanique worked diligently to understand the business' needs. When a coworker left temporarily, Aujanique stepped up to help the team, taking over the compliance work of auditing documentation files. She has since accepted a position as a customer experience representative with the company, where she'll use their tuition reimbursement program to earn an associate's degree in business.*

*In his apprenticeship at Intertech Plastics, 17-year-old **Kevin King** has managed to design plastic parts, automate cell development, execute logic-driven part extraction, program robot and vision systems, and more. Since the start of his apprenticeship, he has, in the words of his coworkers, blossomed. Through his apprenticeship, Kevin has gained skills to help a local manufacturer build and design automated assembly systems that re-shored an entire line of packaging products from China. Today, Kevin is pursuing a mechanical engineering degree at the University of Colorado while working for Intertech Plastics.*

***Chloe Lomax** worked as a stay-at-home mom for six years before finding her apprenticeship with Hercules Industries. When she decided she wanted to find a job, she said, "I was worried about being out of the workforce for so long." After being connected to Construction Careers Now via Denver Human Services, she was able to become a working, full-time HVAC apprentice. The apprenticeship has had a big impact on her life. She is looking into moving into her own apartment and has excelled in the academic portion of the apprenticeship, placing in the top of her class. Her coworkers say her on-the-job performance has not gone unnoticed and that she serves as a leader for other apprentices. Chloe is an asset to her employer in more ways than one. In addition to working hard in the classroom and on the job, Chloe's efforts to recruit more women, especially women of color, are greatly appreciated. Chloe is well on her way to becoming a journeywoman.*

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After being laid off from his sales job, **Joe Lesniak**, a single father of two, wanted to switch careers. After taking advantage of the services provided by his local workforce center, Joe found out about the partnership program between Centura Health and Arapahoe Community College's Medical Assistant Program. During the six-month program, students take online classes while also gaining on-site and hands-on experience. Apprentices work with Centura supervisors for 26 weeks before taking the National Healthcare Association Medical Assistant certification exam. Apprentices who complete the program become full-time medical assistants at Centura. He applied and entered the program in July 2018, passed his medical assistant certification in December of 2018, and completed his registered apprenticeship in June of 2019. Joe is gainfully employed with Centura and aims to go into nursing.

**Melinda Reyes** also participated in the Centura Health/ACC partnership program. After graduating from Sheridan High School, Melinda Reyes found career guidance with a counselor at Arapahoe/Douglas Works. With the help of her counselor, Melinda began working toward a career in health care. She first worked in a hospital doing laundry and then became a CNA. In January of 2019 she began her journey as a Centura Medical Assistant Apprentice. Due to her passion for healthcare, she was successful in the program. Her coworkers say that she was a joy to have at the clinic. She graduated in July of 2019 and is now working full-time at Centura Health and is starting to host bi-lingual community health sessions so that young people have additional resources. As Melinda works full-time at Centura Health, she is looking to continue her education and become a nurse.

## **Mentors**

**Kristin Rice** is a "response to intervention" instructor, teaching online and lab classes for the Centura/Arapahoe Community College medical assistant apprenticeship. In her role, she goes above and beyond to make sure each apprentice progresses in the program. She follows up with the program's participants and provides them with the resources and knowledge they need to succeed in the accelerated program. Thanks to Kristin's leadership, she has helped this program produce an over 85% retention rate at Centura for ACC graduates. Since the launch of the program, Centura's investment has grown to more than 26 apprentices per cohort, and ACC is now launching this successful program with Health One.

**Shao Yeung's** career has been dedicated to helping all people reach their potential through personal growth, education, and employment. Arapahoe Community College colleagues say they were fortunate to hire Shao as a Work-Based Learning Program Manager. They say she has done an extraordinary job of guiding new apprentices through their technical instruction experience at ACC, providing guidance at every step of the process from recruitment, to interview, to acceptance, to course enrollment, and finally graduation from the program. She has an amazing talent for getting to the heart of the apprentices' needs and serves them through her excellent communication skills and advocacy efforts.

**Mike Wadleigh** is a Career & Technical Education educator in Cherry Creek Schools. His work with students and connects them to internships and apprenticeships. His work with the school district's industry partners expands opportunities for students and puts them on the road to success. Apprentices appreciate Mike's guidance. He's always available to talk via phone or email to the 42 apprentices about their experiences, concerns, and successes. Mike serves as a great role model for the student, helping them see how their apprenticeship in the big picture of their career. His efforts to foster relationships with business partners has provided countless opportunities for students to learn about areas of interest, gain new skills, and explore career paths.

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## **Employers**

**Columbine Health Systems'** Certified Nurse Assistant Apprenticeship program is registered with the US Department of Labor and geared towards students ages 16 and over. The first round of applications opened in March of 2018 and Columbine welcomed their first cohort of 9 students in August of the same year. Students came from Berthoud, Loveland, and Fort Collins. Columbine Health Systems gives students an opportunity to receive training on in-demand skills in Columbine's multiple facilities including administration, physical and occupational therapy, activity coordination, and skilled nursing. Apprentices are trained and employed as Personal Care Providers at the beginning of the program and later complete full training to become Certified Nurse Assistants. Before the end of their first year, they take the state exam for an occupational license and they are hired as CNAs so they can continue working through their apprenticeships.

**Encore Electric** is a Colorado-based company that provides a wide array of electrical construction projects and maintenance services. Recognizing the current and upcoming shortage of electricians statewide and nationwide, Encore Electric created Encore University. The goal of the program is to foster individual and organizational learning, including a four-year apprenticeship program with a curriculum that includes classes on basic safety, tools, blueprints, first aid and CPR, NEC code, and leadership.

Located in Fort Collins, **Associates in Family Medicine** has partnered with Front Range Community College to create a program that allows students to participate in an apprenticeship while also earning a paycheck and college credit and completing their certification in Medical Assisting. Students complete course work in the classroom and online through Front Range Community College that covers the didactic content of the program. When students are in the clinic, they focus on learning the hands-on skills required for providing patient care. Once they've completed their course work and gain hands-on skills, they complete a portfolio that demonstrates their knowledge and the college awards academic credit so that they can graduate with a certificate in Medical Assisting. While in the apprenticeship program, students work towards earning the required hours they need to fulfill the requirements of the US Department of Labor.

**HomeAdvisor** is a tech company that provides homeowners the tools and resources they need to complete their home improvement, maintenance and repair projects. The company has a wide range of strategies and tactics to find the talent it needs and in 2017 it added another tool: a modern youth apprenticeship program. Since the start of their partnership with CareerWise Colorado, HomeAdvisor has hired 16 apprentices from a variety of schools in the Denver area. These apprentices work in many different capacities. Many work in the tech jobs you might expect, such as desktop support, coding and development, or quality assurance testing, while others work in various business support roles such as HR, accounting, project management, and marketing. HomeAdvisor has been committed to its apprenticeship program over the years, and prioritizes putting apprentices quickly into real and meaningful work. During the program, apprentices learn, firsthand, how their work impacts the company's bottom line and. With their recent move to the RINO neighborhood, HomeAdvisor is able to draw more heavily from the DPS school network, increasing the diversity of hires they make.

**SCL Health** launched their youth apprenticeship program in June. Four apprentices began to work as apprentice medical assistants in three family medicine clinics located in Denver, Westminster, and Lafayette. One apprentice began work as a Healthcare Financial Services Representative in the Revenue Service Center located in Broomfield. Apprentices in medical clinics are working towards the supervised hours and competencies required to test for a Medical Assistant certification. The apprentice working in financial services

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pursuing a credential related to the revenue cycle. SCL chooses to recruit and hire apprentices from several school districts in order to grow a diverse workforce representative of the population it serves.

## **Programs**

**Denver Pipefitters Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee (JATC)**, a five-year apprenticeship program registered with the Department of Labor and the Office of Apprenticeship. One of the program's unique features is its longevity: it was formed over 75 years ago. The JATC is a partnership between Denver Pipefitters Local 208 and both the Mechanical Contractors Association of Northeastern Colorado and the Mechanical Service Contractors Association of Northeastern Colorado. Local 208 has approximately 1800 members and works with an estimated 100 individual contractors involved with the two associations. Denver Pipefitters JATC currently enjoys a 70 percent completion rate and over a 99 percent job placement rate. With an annual tuition of 200 dollars, apprentices earn a debt-free education. Through their program, Denver Pipefitters JATC has provided more skilled professionals in the pipefitting and HVAC Service industry than any single program in the state of Colorado, allowing residents to access high-paying jobs that enrich lives and help drive the entire local economy.

**Adams County's Youth Succeed** program is a federally-funded Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act program through the Adams County Workforce and Business Center that helps approximately 300 youth every year obtain a high school diploma, GED, or post-secondary certificate or training. The program is designed for young adults with low incomes facing barriers to employment, offers career counseling, access to alternative schools, financial assistance for career programs and professional certifications, tutoring, work-related workshops and trainings, paid and unpaid work experiences including internships and job shadowing, and much much more.

**Emily Griffith Technical College (EGTC)** has a rich history of offering apprenticeship training, dating as far back as 1917. Students in apprenticeship programs are co-enrolled with EGTC and the training partner with the school granting college credit for the coursework and on-the-job training hours they complete. Co-enrollment allows the training partner to be affiliated with an educational institution and provides validation of educational offerings by increased oversight of curriculum from an educational perspective. They currently have over 4,000 apprentices in their programs. Our programs issue college credits through the Colorado Community College System and CSU-Global, allowing students to continue their education if they choose.

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