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## **Southwest Colorado Workforce and Southwest Colorado Community College Put People to Work**

**CORTEZ/MANCOS** – Over the last two years, hundreds of individuals have received training at Southwest Colorado Community College to prepare them to work in the energy and mining industries. In 2008, the southwest and western Colorado Workforce regions were awarded \$2 million to prepare people for employment in the growing industries of oil & gas extraction and mining.

Colorado Workforce partnered with the former San Juan Basin Technical College and is now partnered with Southwest Colorado Community College (SCCC) to provide the hands-on training in courses such as heavy equipment operations, commercial driving, mine safety, welding, and CAD (Computer-Aided Design). Individuals came from throughout the Four Corners region to participate in the training courses held at SCCC's West campus in Mancos.

The training for this project was conducted through SCCC's Industry Training Center, a department of the college that focuses on providing customized business training. "When we were developing this program, the goal was to provide basic skills training to get individuals to work fast," said Bob Bragg, Project Coordinator at SCCC. "The College was able to respond to regional employment and training needs outside of its usual semester-long programs." The result was the development of short-term training courses with the intention of getting people to work quickly.

While hundreds of people did enter the workforce, some participants went on to receive additional education and training before heading to work. In the last two years, SCCC has put at least 268 to work in energy-related and mining industries.

Just in the last few months, eighteen more people became employed: twelve graduates from the commercial driving training; three graduates from the heavy equipment training; and at least three individuals from mine safety. These people have gotten jobs with companies in Durango, Hesperus, Cortez, Utah and California.

This effort was part of a Community-Based Job Training grant from the US Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration. Grant funds covered the cost of tuition, supplies and fees in order to make the training affordable. The grant is anticipated to finish in August 2010.

As the project wraps up, Workforce officials are pleased with the results. "This initiative has been a very good example of partnerships between industry, higher education, and workforce," said Dave Griffin, Project Manager for the Colorado Rural Workforce Consortium in Denver. "Community colleges have always played a vital role in preparing the workforce of the future and this grant positioned educators to do even more," says Donald J. Mares, Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment. "We are delighted with the results. The collaborative relationship we have built with Southwest Community College will produce important and far-reaching results that will benefit Colorado for years to come."

Locally, Durango-based Chloe Wiebe, Regional Supervisor for the Southwest CO Workforce Centers is proud of the accomplishments made by her staff and SCCC. Wiebe said, "Unemployed people were able to get trained and put to work after one or several weeks of training. That has made a big impact in our region."

Southwest Colorado Community College's Industry Training Center continues to provide a wide variety of customized business training throughout southwest Colorado such as: Phlebotomy, Computer, Basic Plumbing, Supervisor Skills, Hydrogen Sulfide Certification, Customer Service, and Forklift Operator. Training can be conducted either at the college or on site at local businesses. For more information on the Industry Training Center, call 970.564.6222.

The fall academic semester for Southwest Colorado Community College begins August 23, 2010. For more information, visit: [www.enrollsouthwest.org](http://www.enrollsouthwest.org) or call 970.564.6200.

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*Founded in 1933, Pueblo Community College is a premier teaching institution focused on providing academic and service excellence to help its students acquire the 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills needed to better their lives. An educational and technological leader, PCC fosters economic development and utilizes strong partnerships in the communities it serves through its Pueblo, Fremont and Southwest Colorado campuses.*