

# SUCCESS STORIES

## America's Promise Grants

### — GRANTEE MODELS —



From left to right: Jill Quinlan, the five Canatal Steel employees, and Morgan Romeo

**New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Area (NRMR)** – Canatal Steel in Botetourt County is thriving. Now employing over 120 people, this local business produces steel beams for large construction projects throughout the United States. However, Canatal’s customers recently began to demand higher testing levels to certify the soundness of welds for quality steel fabricated parts for a very specific structural application. The inspectors of these parts need the American Society for Nondestructive Testing Level II - Magnetic Particle, Liquid Penetrant, and Visual Testing certifications. Prior to this, Canatal Steel had a third party verify the soundness of their welds, but this was costly. With the increase in projects, Canatal Steel accesses the *Pathways to the American Dream* program to provide training to these employees, allowing them to become **certified Non-Destructive Test Technicians**. They now complete this quality compliance process in-house which increases the company’s capacity to meet the demands of their customers.

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As Tim Doss, Canatal Steel's Quality Control Supervisor, explained, "With the amount of this type of testing we are starting to see in job requirements, it will soon be necessary and a requirement of the inspectors to have these certifications."

Canatal Steel had a choice: hire new employees or upskill their current employees. They chose the latter and identified five employees to undergo the training and certification process. Doss further commented, "If we did not provide the training for these certifications, then we will have to find people who already have them. I would much rather have these guys receive the training than find people who already have it." Not only would the certifications provide job advancement and a pay raise for these employees, but, also they would give Canatal Steel an opportunity to do their own testing and therefore not have to outsource their inspections—a significant cost-savings and a win-win for both the company and employees.

Canatal Steel then contacted the Western Virginia Workforce Development Board to ask for assistance in the training and certification process for their five identified employees. Because the board's WIOA funds were limited for incumbent worker training, they identified their *Pathways to the American Dream* program as a possible solution for Canatal Steel's effort. *Pathways* is an America's Promise H-1B Job Ready initiative funded by the US Department of Labor to the New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Investment Area Consortium Board in partnership with the Western Virginia board and two other workforce boards comprising a footprint of 35 jurisdictions in southwest and southern Virginia. After the initial intake process, the five employees were enrolled in the *Pathways* program and began training under the Engineering Technician occupation, which includes NDT Technician.

Each of the five employees completed 330 hours of on-the-job training and 40 hours of classroom instruction, passed the written exam, and earned the certifications. These Level II Technicians are now familiar with all applicable codes, standards, and other documents that control the NDT method being used. They can set up and calibrate equipment, conduct the inspection according to procedures, as well as interpret, evaluate, and document results in all the testing methods. Further, these technicians can provide on-the-job training for Level I employees and serve in a supervisory capacity. "The value for participants," Jill Quinlan, the *Pathways* Workforce System Navigator, commented, "is job security, career advancement, and an increase in pay, which is quite significant—an average of over two dollars per hour. This company was willing to do everything it needed to do to get their employees certified."

The Western Virginia Workforce Development Board is pleased that one of their companies benefited so greatly from Workforce System services. Morgan Romeo, Executive Director of the board stated, "We are thrilled that the *Pathways* project was able to assist the Western Virginia Workforce Development Board in helping a valued business in our region. With this training, not only is Canatal Steel going to be able to bring some work in-house, which will hopefully make them more profitable, it has also helped them identify the Board as a true partner in their success in the future. We hope to assist them in additional ways in the future to promote growth and success in our region."

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