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Six men honored as first timber harvesting graduates from CF Levy Campus



(from left) Instructor Bryan Olmert is joined by graduates Charles McCullar, Garrett Bowker, Joshua Randolph, Guy Bowers, Hunter Matus and Thomas Conrad.

Story and Photos

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CHIEFLAND – Six men accepted certificates Friday (June 30) after an eight-week program to become timber harvesters.

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The College of Central Florida Levy Campus held a graduation ceremony for the inaugural class of the college's new non-credit Timber Harvesting certificate program.

CF Levy Campus Provost Rayanne Giddis, Ed.D., welcomed the people who came to the event.

Dr. Giddis said the start of the program proved to be challenging at times.

On Friday, though, she was pleased to say these six graduates have done an exceptional job in completing the program. The graduates are Guy Bowers, Garrett Bowker, Thomas Conrad, Zachary Matus, Charles McCullar and Joshua Randolph.

They each earned Master Logger certification, Occupational Safety Hazard Administration 10-hour certification and CPR certification in the eight-week program that began in May.

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Instructor Bryan Olmert holds a certificate ready for presentation.



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CF Levy Campus Manager Holly McGlashan



Bryan Olmert congratulates Thomas Conrad as he gives him his certificates.

Before CF Levy Campus Manager Holly McGlashan and CF Timber Harvesting Equipment Program Consultant and Instructor Bryan Olmert presented the graduates with their certificates, Giddis listed several people and organizations that helped bring the program to fruition.

There are a couple of strong starting points. First there was a \$200,000 grant from Lyme Timber. Added to that was input especially from Lynetta Griner and Ken Griner of Usher Land and Timber.

Lynetta Griner, a past president of the Florida Forestry Association, had let people know of the need for qualified heavy equipment operators who can handle the machines used to harvest pine trees.

This program included hands-on work.

The final three weeks of the eight-week program included hands-on participation by the students, McGlashan told HardisonInk.com before the ceremony. Students helped the state workers harvest pines from Goethe State Forest, she said.

The CF timber program is offered thanks to support from Beard Equipment, the Florida Forest Service, Loncala, Ring Power, Tidewater Equipment, Tri-County Oil, and Usher Land and Timber.

There was also an \$11,000 Big Bend Region Seed Grant from the Arlington, Virginia-based Conservation Fund.

Dr. Giddis spoke about some of the other people who helped make the whole program a success.

As she opened the graduation ceremony on Friday morning, Giddis said it took a lot of input from individuals and organizations.

After the ceremony, Giddis told HardisonInk.com that this inaugural program was free to the students. Future timber-harvesting classes and programs, she said, may have

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a cost attached to it for students in this non-credit course.

The college will review the actual cost, the curriculum, the results of students' benefitting and the partnerships that were initially utilized, Dr. Giddis said.

This program is the first of its kind in Florida, was created to increase the number of workforce ready employees for the timber industry in North Central Florida.



Refreshments provided by a local caterer stand ready to be enjoyed by people after the event.