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Bonita Unified Graduates Receive Welding Certifications After Completing CTE Training

SAN DIMAS/LA VERNE – Bonita High School Class of 2023 graduate Micah Tofilau discovered he had a knack for working with his hands when he took a jewelry-making class as a junior. Realizing that Tofilau had a great aptitude for soldering and fabricating, his instructor Brian Harrison recommended that he look into pursuing a career as a welder.

Tofilau was one of nine recent Bonita Unified graduates who received welding certifications from the Welding Certification Center (WCC) in Pomona during a special graduation ceremony on Nov. 21, after taking advantage of a 16-week career technical education (CTE) pilot program that provided low- to no-cost certification training to high school students, through a partnership with Pomona Valley America’s Job Center of California (AJCC) and the Los Angeles County Department of Economic Opportunity (LACDEO).

“I never really expected this. I was coming in two days a week and wondering how they were going to make me a good welder. It turns out I’m a pretty good welder,” Tofilau said. “I would recommend this program to any student who has an interest in welding. The instructors are friendly. They want you to succeed and get a job and do well.”

Joining Tofilau for the graduation ceremony were Bonita Unified graduates Luke Lemos, Damien Castillo, Logan Lubetski, Ryan Barton, Brendon Owen, Sevag Gharibian, Nate Macias and Kayleen Espinoza. They all received certifications after passing their shielded metal arc welding vertical and overhead exams. The graduates are now officially licensed to work by both the American Welding Society and the Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety.

“I’m very proud of all of the students that came here to receive their training because every single one of them devoted themselves to learning how to weld and they all did a remarkable job,” WCC site administrator and head welding instructor Dan Lando said. “Every graduate departs tonight with the ability to weld and can get a job. Congratulations to all of our young graduates.”

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NEWS RELEASE

Bonita Unified CTE Coordinator Vanessa Tilford organized the pilot program to provide opportunities for students who want to learn a trade and immediately join the workforce instead of attending a four-year college. The LACDEO covered the cost of the tuition so that students could attend an accelerated course at the WCC, the only state-licensed private welding school in Los Angeles County.

“I am so proud of these amazing young adults, who are now able to immediately join the workforce. With their welding certifications, they can look for work anywhere in the country, and make a good living,” Tilford said. “Thank you to our partners at the WCC, AJCC and LACDEO for providing this opportunity, and to the District for placing a priority on CTE training, so that our students can expand their post-secondary options.”

Tilford added that Bonita Unified hopes to expand the program past the pilot stage and is working with the LACDEO to help fund the program for the 2025-26 school year.

PHOTO:

BUSD_WELDING: Bonita Unified graduates who took advantage of a low-cost career technical education training program at the Welding Certification Center in Pomona are all smiles after receiving their welding certifications on Nov. 21. Thanks to a partnership between Bonita Unified School District, Pomona Valley America’s Job Center and the Los Angeles County Department of Economic Opportunity, the students were able to take a 16-week accelerated training course that prepared them to take and pass their shielded metal arc welding vertical and overhead exams.

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