



MEDIA RELEASE

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919 N Broad Street • Brooksville, FL 34601

Governor Approves Grant For Hernando Schools

Brooksville - Last night, Hernando School District learned that it is the recipient of nearly \$1.2 million in grant funds following the Governor's announcement. The school district's award is part of the Governor's \$10.5 million plan to Expand Registered Apprenticeship and Preapprenticeship (ERAP) programs at school districts, state colleges and technical colleges throughout the state.

Hernando Schools plans to use the \$1,173,900 ERAP funds to bring construction trade programs to the Adult Education Department's Suncoast Technical Education Center (SunTech). Sophia Watson, Director of Adult and Technical Education, said SunTech will partner with Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc. (ABC) to bring eight construction-based apprenticeship programs to Hernando County, including electrical, plumbing, HVAC, sheet metal, fire protection, carpentry, craft labor and roofing. This will be the first time SunTech will offer an apprenticeship program.

"Over a year ago, we began to develop a plan to bring these high-demand programs to our adult education school after hearing from the construction industry of their urgent need for workforce-ready tradesman. Our original plan would have taken much longer, phasing in programs as we could afford to. With the ERAP funding, we will be able to deliver much sooner," Superintendent John Stratton said.

"This apprenticeship grant will provide an immediate opportunity for students and adults to continue a career path in the construction trades industry. Because of the large number of construction partners, the district is well positioned to offer apprenticeship options on a scale never before seen in the district. This is absolutely 'the real deal' in real time, one that will benefit all of Hernando County," said Susan Duval, School Board Vice Chair.

ABC, with more than 2,000 member organizations, represents close to 20% of the state's existing apprenticeship programs so the grant expects to draw individuals from throughout the region. "The Associated Builders and Contractors Florida Gulf Coast Chapter is excited to work with Hernando County Schools to expand apprenticeship offering to train the next generation of skilled workers. We would like to thank Gov. Ron DeSantis for his commitment to building Florida's workforce," said Steve Cona III, ABC President/CEO.

