



News Release Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest

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For Immediate Release

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Learning a new career, one circuit at a time

Blackwell Job Corps electrical students gain hands-on experience while renovating the new CNNF Supervisor's Office

Laona, Wis. – April 10, 2009. Since January 2008, the Chequamegon-Nicolet NF has utilized Blackwell Job Corps students of various vocational training programs at the site of the new soon-to-be Forest Supervisor's office. At a recent visit to the building, Job Corps Electrical Program students were found hard at work.

With a capacity of 24 students, the Electrical Program provides training in residential and commercial electrical construction. Work at the new building provides them with valuable hands-on skills not found in a classroom setting. The Electrical Program students have been providing a variety of labor at the new building since January 2008. According to their Electrical Instructor, John Houts, "For the next 7 to 8 weeks, the crew will complete construction projects from installing exit lights and the fire alarm system, to wiring the new garage built by the Carpentry students."

While all Job Corps training programs are described as 'self-paced', students in the Electrical program usually complete the required training in approximately 9 months. Additionally, students also accomplish approximately 360 hours of Work Based Learning on actual building projects. Once they have met additional education goals and obtained a driver's license, they are ready to hit the job market. For a six-month period following graduation, they are provided with Career Transition Services (CTS; at least one is in every state) who help them transition from Job Corps to the workforce. Many find positions as electrician helpers, making from \$10.00 to \$14.50, and some may be placed in apprenticeship positions in the Electrician's Union.

On any given day, a crew of 10 to 11 out of 24 electrical program students currently enrolled in the program can be found at the building site. The remaining students are back at Blackwell, either working through the earlier stages of their vocational training, or in classrooms studying for their High School Equivalency Diploma. In addition, some of the electrical students can be found in a Driver's Education Class.



Student Foreman Seaworth assists another student in the installation of a plate cover.

I met up with two students while visiting the site last week – Emmanuel "Manny" Arias and Corey Seaworth. Both students have completed all the required hours for the program and are practicing more hands-on skills and they prepare for the transition from Job Corps to work. For the electrical

crew, Arias is the Crew Leader who oversees an individual crew of students, and Seaworth is the Student Foreman who oversees all the crews.

Arias, 21, hails from South Bend, Indiana, is originally from Mexico, and was raised in Texas. He has one small child back home. The 21 year old has been at Blackwell for 10 months. He came to Blackwell with a GED. He's hoping to eventually become a lineman and is willing to relocate anywhere in the US. Arias described his life outside Job Corps as going the wrong way. "I had been on the streets, and in a gang. Job Corps changes your view on life." he said.



Crew Leader Arias puts the finishing touches on a junction box.

Seaworth, who is 22 years old, comes from Loves Park in Illinois. He has been at Blackwell for 14 months, and arrived at the Center with a High School Diploma. He is also interested in the electrical lineman field, and will be looking for work in either southern Wisconsin or northern Illinois. He opted to stay on because he believes the hands-on work at the building will better prepare him for employment. Corey came from a middle class suburban area with little exposure to diverse populations in the world of work. He states, "Here at Blackwell, I've learned how to relate and work with people from different backgrounds than mine. I didn't have that opportunity back at home."

Houts speaks highly of these two young men, "These are some of the best students I've had in this program since I've been here. They're quick learners and hard workers." Speaking of their instructor, both Arias and Seaworth were very complimentary, saying they couldn't ask for a better instructor. "He knows a lot, teaches a lot, and lets us know when we mess up and when we're doing good work. He's like a member of our family," they said.

Over the past 15 months, many of Blackwell's vocational programs have had the opportunity to learn their respective skills working on the job at the new building site, and some crews will be returning later this year to provide the finishing touches: Carpentry, Masonry, Construction Crafts, and Painting.

"We are grateful that our students have had the opportunity to enhance the skills of their vocation by working in the future Forest Supervisor's office. It continues to give us the opportunity to demonstrate how the Blackwell Job Corps Center continues to play a role in the future of the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest," said Center Director, Riana Ventura.

Blackwell Job Corps Civilian Conservation Center is located approximately 4 miles south of Laona. For more information or to schedule a tour, contact the Center at 715-674-2311.

Visit Blackwell on the web at: <http://blackwell.jobcorps.gov/home.aspx>