

# MINDING THE GAP

BY MARK EVANS

## ***A shortfall in qualified apartment maintenance technicians is being addressed by an NAA Education Institute course as part of a North Carolina community college program.***

**L**ike many areas of the country, apartment communities in northwest North Carolina are struggling to find qualified applicants to fill maintenance technician jobs. To help meet this growing need, the National Apartment Association Education Institute (NAAEI) is working closely with industry and local affiliates to create new sources of skilled workers.

One of these new partnerships brings together the Piedmont Triad Apartment Association (PTAA), Goodwill Industries of Northwest North Carolina and Forsyth Tech Community College in a pilot program to expand the reach of Certified Apartment Maintenance Training (CAMT) courses in Greensboro, N.C. Goodwill has incorporated the CAMT curriculum into the Facility Maintenance Tech Training course it offers through Forsyth Tech.

PTAA Executive Director Jon Lowder says the partnership with Goodwill allows the affiliate to reach a much broader audience and accommodate many more students than the affiliate could alone. The program also helps PTAA gain exposure in front of the region's business community.

"Goodwill is helping us broaden our universe of maintenance technicians," he says. "Our industry has an obvious need for peo-

ple to fill those positions. This program helps us bring in new people who our members can tap to fill those jobs."

The No. 1 need of PTAA's members is filling maintenance jobs, he says. The affiliate's website job board is always full of listings for maintenance technician jobs, but PTAA only has the staffing to offer the CAMT so many times a year.

### **All The Training Needed**

While the CAMT includes just over 90 hours of coursework and is typically spread over a couple of weeks or taken online, the Facility Maintenance Tech Training course offered by Goodwill and Forsyth Tech is 276 hours (including the CAMT component) and is spread over 12 weeks and tailored more for college students. It is offered on an ongoing basis throughout the year.

Students taking the course this fall are the first ones to follow the updated course curriculum, which includes the CAMT components. Students who complete the program can earn a provisional CAMT designation until they complete one year of apartment maintenance work experience, at which time they will achieve the full designation. They also earn their CFC (chlorofluorocarbon) and pool/spa certifications.

Jerry Hobson, technical skills coordinator at Forsyth Tech,

# ForsythTech

*More Than You Know*

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—Jerry Hobson  
Technical Skills Coordinator  
Forsyth Technical  
Community College

teaches the course and says it is designed to point students toward careers in apartment maintenance.

“The course is intended to be all the training a student would need for an entry-level maintenance job,” Hobson says.

The course is a stand-alone class to help students obtain work in the maintenance field. In fact, Hobson says, one of his current classes targets those people whose unemployment benefits have run out and who need to find work.

Tempy Albright, job developer/skills training manager for Goodwill Industries of Northwest North Carolina, says the course was originally created based on input from Greensboro-area industries—such as hospitals, hotels, nursing homes,

universities, and similar businesses.

It wasn’t until later that organizers realized they had left out the apartment industry, which is a huge employer in the area.

“It definitely was a piece that was missing from the course,” she says. “The Piedmont Triad Apartment Association represents so many different apartment communities. That labor market has a tremendous need.”

## Employers Lining Up

Because of the partnership with PTAA and NAAEI, Albright says, students interested in the apartment industry often will now have jobs lined up before they even complete the course. The local demand for apartment maintenance technicians is such that any student looking for an apartment industry job should have no problem finding one through the career fairs that are offered several times a year for the students, Albright says.

For example, according to Albright, one apartment community recently hired two students who had taken the class.

Both students have already been promoted, and the community’s manager hopes to use the next job fair to fill additional maintenance technician openings.

“More and more apartment communities are being built in our area, so there will be a growing need for skilled maintenance technicians,” she says.

# Goodwill

Northwest North Carolina

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—Tempy Albright  
Training Manager  
Goodwill Industries of  
Northwest North Carolina

“All of the feedback we have received on the course from businesses and apartment communities is how thorough it is.”

Jeff Mosley, workforce business services coordinator for the Piedmont Triad Regional Council, says qualifying students also may be eligible to have their employers reimbursed for a portion of their salaries under the U.S. Workforce Investment Act.

The national program is designed to fill “skill gaps” in a community, but students must first enroll in the program through their local workforce development commission—the Piedmont Triad Regional Council in this case.

Denise Hrabosky, PTAA Director of Education, says the affiliate’s role in the partnership is to connect interested

## FEBRUARY 2013

SAVE THE DATE



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## February 2013 is National Apartment Careers Month

*Find out how you, your company or your local apartment association can participate, and learn how to win a free registration to attend the 2013 NAA Education Conference & Exposition in San Diego, June 19-22, 2013.*

Visit [www.naahq.org/education/naaei/campaigns/](http://www.naahq.org/education/naaei/campaigns/) and learn how to participate, download the Participant Toolkit and the official National Apartment Careers Month logo. Don't forget to tell us what you're planning for February 2013!  
Contact: [education@naahq.org](mailto:education@naahq.org).

students with apartment industry job opportunities.

For example, Goodwill held a career fair for the facility maintenance tech students last spring at which seven PTAA member companies participated. As a result, several students were hired for maintenance positions.

“Our industry is always looking for maintenance technicians, and an increasing number of companies like them to be CAMT certified,” she says. “We figured this partnership would be a great marriage between the two of us.”

She says her CAMT classes always fill up because many local apartment management companies require their techs to be CAMT certified. The Housing Authority of Winston-Salem has been a big supporter of the CAMT and has even made it mandatory for its maintenance supervisors, she says.

Lowder says that’s why the Goodwill/Forsyth Tech facility maintenance tech program is the perfect supplement to PTAA’s own CAMT program.



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*Executive Director, Piedmont Triad  
Apartment Association*

Companies cannot spare the time away from the job to send employees through a 12-week, 276-hour course. For them, PTAA’s CAMT course is the ideal choice.

The Goodwill/Forsyth Tech program

will help increase the pool of skilled maintenance staff in the Greensboro area, he says. That’s good news for property managers who have had a difficult time filling maintenance positions.

Lowder says the partnership also helps PTAA promote February’s Apartment Careers Month (see opposite page for more information). When PTAA staff members participate in high school career fairs, they can now point students who may be interested in an apartment career to the Forsyth program as a means for them to obtain the education and experience needed to qualify for a job in the apartment industry. ■

*Mark Evans is Staff Writer for public relations firm Catalyst.*

### Learn About the Course

Information about the course may be found at [www.forsythtech.edu](http://www.forsythtech.edu) or by contacting Piedmont Triad Apartment Association or Goodwill Industries of NW North Carolina.

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