

Tablet Training Revamps Traditional CAMT Learning

BY LAUREN BOSTON

L

ogan Gustafson doesn't have time to keep his head in the books; he's too busy fulfilling service requests as a maintenance technician for Corvias Military Living.

But his head in the tablet? Well, that's a different story.

Gustafson was one of 24 Corvias employees who participated in the NAA Education Institute (NAAEI) National Certificate for Apartment Maintenance Technicians

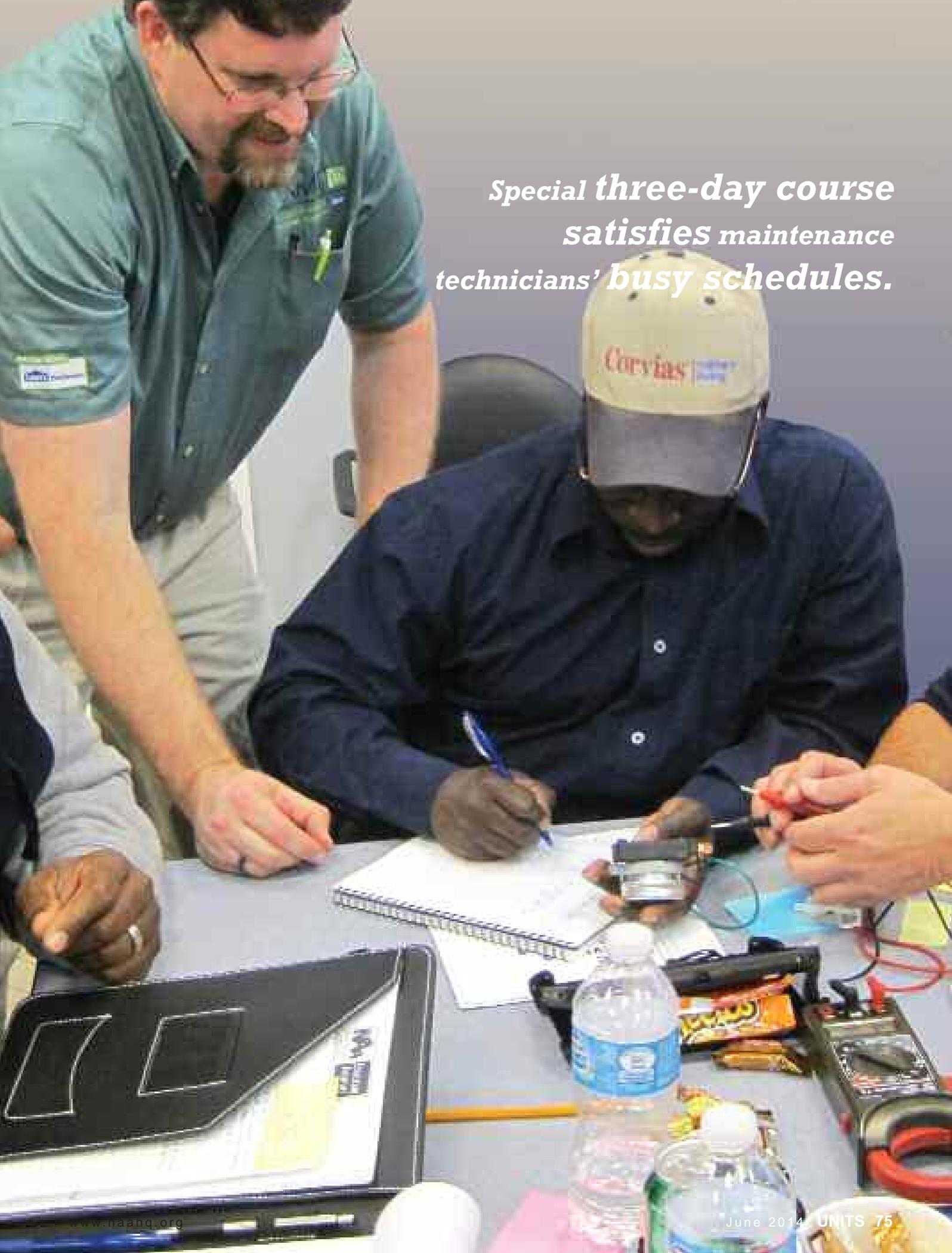
(CAMT) tablet training last fall. Corvias Group flew employees from around the country to Fort Meade, Md., and hosted the pilot program—now open to all property types, not just military housing.

The program has removed one of the biggest roadblocks for maintenance technicians who want to earn their CAMT designation by putting together a blended learning version of the course that reduces the amount of in-person training from eight days down to three.

The blended learning course delivers lessons through an app on the Samsung Galaxy tablet. The app provides access to the CAMT e-book, instructional maintenance videos, online maintenance courses on NAAEI's Learning Management System and an English-Spanish Maintenance Terminology Guide. It also includes the heating, ventilation and air conditioning handbook.

"I guarantee I enjoyed using the tablet a lot more than I would have enjoyed using a textbook," says Gustafson, who can now conveniently ref-





*Special three-day course
satisfies maintenance
technicians' busy schedules.*

erence his tablet training materials while on the job in Fort Riley, Kansas. “I’m a nine-year maintenance veteran and consider myself to be pretty skilled, and I still learned a lot.”

The tablet and the app are included in the \$800 per person course cost along with the required three days of in-person training by NAAEI’s National Maintenance and Safety Instructor Paul Rhodes, CAMT.

“This new approach to the CAMT means that we can deliver the course content in a way that limits the amount of time maintenance technicians have to be off-property for training,” Rhodes says. “With the usage of various mobile devices increasing for service technicians onsite, this seems to be the perfect method to increase technical proficiency while still remaining on property to provide various resident services.”

The tablet training version is spread over eight weeks instead of the traditional CAMT course’s eight days. During the eight weeks, students watch a series of live and recorded webinars, complete online course modules and work on homework assignments, which include quizzes on the presented material. They meet for three days of in-person training during the seventh week.

Kevin Connally, a Fort Polk, La.-based maintenance technician, says the course schedule did not interfere with his job responsibilities.

“I was apprehensive at first, but Corvias really gave me more than enough time to complete my coursework,” says Connally, who believes the tablet and corresponding videos were instrumental to his learning. “There were four maintenance technicians from our base who participated and if one person wasn’t

progressing, we’d all help him out. I was even able to create two huge study books as reference points.”

Hands-On Learning

From an instructor’s point of view, Rhodes says the students had a beneficial head start when they arrived at Fort Meade.

“On the first day of the in-person component, everybody came into the room already knowing the content by and large, so we were able to focus those three days of in-person training on how to apply that information,” Rhodes says. “This made the class more relaxing for me as an instructor, because I could simply remind the students of the information that was covered in the webinars and then apply it in practice.”

Although classroom time has decreased, Rhodes says the hands-on practice is still an integral component of the CAMT program.

“I have taught classes in the past that did not include this component,” Rhodes says. “While this is a good way to teach theory and terminology, the retention rate is generally low, and application to the job may be difficult for some students. As a maintenance technician’s job is tactile in nature, being able to actually ‘do’ something helps the tech remember to apply the knowledge once they are back onsite. This new format essentially takes the bookwork and allows it to be completed prior to the hands-on portion of the class.”

Connally agrees, and says he appreciated the focused classroom time. “I’ve always had difficulty with HVAC,” he says. “Going up there and doing it yourself—that was invaluable.”



Corvias Military Living employees gather in Fort Meade, Md., for the three-day, in-person component of a new CAMT tablet training program.

Now that it has launched the blended-learning version of the CAMT, NAAEI plans to create a similar course for its National Apartment Leasing Professional (NALP) designation as it updates the online and classroom versions of the program.

To learn more about the CAMT tablet training program, contact NAAEI's Shana Treger at 703-797-0608.



Maintaining Relationships

Louisiana is miles away from Maryland—1,237 to be exact—but when Connally has a question, he knows help is a quick phone call away.

“In the past, I wouldn’t really know how to get ahold of maintenance technicians at other military bases,” Connally says. “After spending three days with everyone, I’ve developed personal and professional relationships with guys from Fort

Meade to Fort Riley and Fort Bragg. We all keep in touch—it’s awesome.”

Corvias Group Learning and Development Manager Melissa Janes says this was just one of the many benefits of the CAMT tablet training, which still allowed for such interaction despite a shorter, in-person component.

“One of the challenges of the eight-day course was the loss of our team members from delivering one of our core principles, exceptional customer service, for an extended period of time,” Janes says. “There was also a ‘cram’ mentality to learn all of the material, practice it and test on it within an eight-day period.”

Richard Giusti, Vice President of Facilities and Asset Management for Corvias Military Living, agrees and says the tablet version allowed technicians to learn at their own pace and apply the information they learned in real time.

“By allowing the training to take place from their typical work location, it enabled our maintenance technicians to discuss their course work with their fellow associates and perform the work in the field,” says Giusti, who has already noticed an improvement in work-order completion times.

In feedback obtained from students, employees report the course gave them increased confidence in their role and technical skills, demonstrated the company’s commitment to develop them as a team member and increased their comfort levels in interacting with customers.

Connally agrees and says the course covered everything from enhancing curb appeal to interacting with residents.

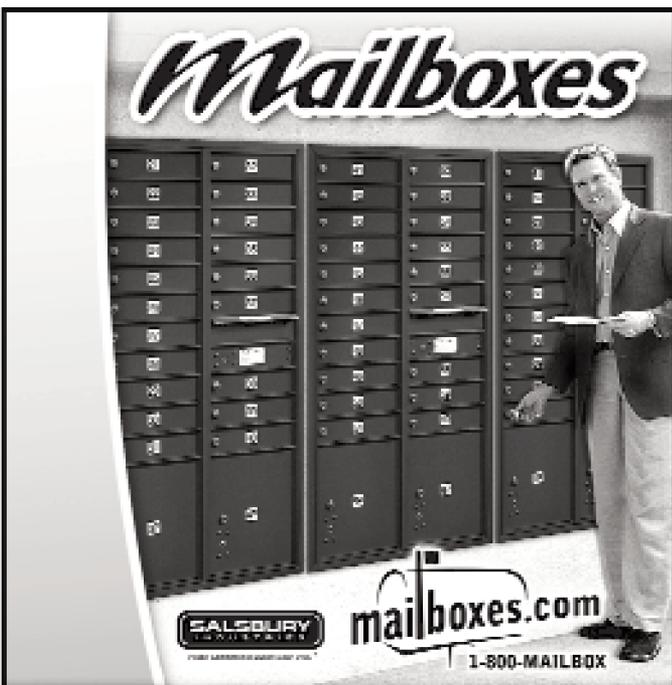
“I like creating personal relationships with residents and interacting with their kids, and Corvias’ level of dedication to improving these relationships is wonderful,” he says. “What company in this day and age would put something like this together? I think it should be mandatory for everyone.”

Adds Gustafson, “I now have a better outlook on how residents who don’t have my maintenance expertise may look at—and feel during—an emergency situation. Paul was the best instructor I’ve ever had and really taught us how to help calm residents in these situations.”

For Corvias, the payoff is priceless.

“As a company, the benefits of this learning are not only felt today but will be received well into the future,” Janes says. “We feel that this was a truly beneficial program and are happy to have brought it to Corvias Group and our teams.” ■

Lauren Boston is NAA's Staff Writer and Manager of Public Relations. She can be reached at lauren@naahq.org or 703-797-0678. Mark Evans contributed to this article.



**Contact us for a
Free quote or catalog!
1-800-624-5269**