

VISTA: Builders group offers apprenticeships for charter students

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A Vista-based construction-themed charter school has teamed up with a local contractors association to offer books and tools to graduates interested in apprenticeship programs.

Seniors at North County Trade Tech High School who plan to go straight to work after graduation will be eligible for the scholarship, which will cover the necessary materials over the course of the three- to five-year programs.

Students will work full time and take classes twice a week.

“We don’t want money to stand in the way,” said Doreen Quinn, the school’s chief executive officer.

The local chapter of Associated Builders and Contractors agreed to offer help to the students because the trade group has been impressed with the hard work of the students there, said Sherry Yarbrough, executive director of the organization’s training trust.

“They just seem to be really bright and motivated,” she said. “I think Trade Tech is changing lives.”

The group expects to sponsor between five and 10 graduates each year, Yarbrough said. A full five-year scholarship could come to as much as \$5,000 per student, she said.

The deal also will benefit Associated Builders and Contractors by

helping its members find qualified and motivated workers, Yarbrough said.

“It’s going to be a huge benefit for (the group’s) contractors as well as providing a great opportunity for these students,” she said.

The trade group was particularly impressed with the school’s jump in

been able to work out the kinks and have had more time with the students, some of whom have been there since the school opened in 2008, Principal Bryan O’Donnell said.

There are about 120 students enrolled at the school this year, including about 25 seniors, he said.

Most of those students plan to head to college after they graduate, but for the ones who don’t, the apprenticeships offer them a pathway to a good job, he said.

Danny Aguilar, a senior at the school, said he is excited about the chance to be an electrician apprentice next year.

“It feels good that somebody’s actually going to give up the money for you to buy all of the stuff that you need for work and studying,” he said.

Over the last couple of years, the school has garnered support and donations from many construction com-

panies and public officials.

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Tyler Velarde, 17, left, Jacob Cambell, 17, and Dahlia San Miguel, 18 ---- all seniors at Trade Tech High School in Vista ---- listen as their teacher gives a lesson in economics on Thursday. Photo by MISAEEL VIRGEN | mvirgen@nctimes.com

its test scores this year, she said.

Trade Tech’s score on the state’s Academic Performance Index rose 159 points this year ---- from 558 in 2010-11 to 717 on a scale between 200 and 1,000. It was the biggest increase of any school in the county and the biggest across the state for a charter school.

After a rocky start with test scores, educators at the school have

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