

# THE NEWSLETTER

The Association of Joint Labor/Management Educational Programs

## One Woman's Journey

By DeAnn Basden, Vice President, The Sage Group



*Valda Blanton was recognized for her accomplishments at the Association's 2002 Conference with an original award created by NYC School of the Future Students.*

At the Association conference last year, electronic technician Valda Blanton (BellSouth-Employment Security PARTNERSHIP CWA) was recognized for her commitment to lifelong learning. Since Valda could not be there to accept her award in person, the story of her journey to personal growth and satisfaction is presented below.

From clerical worker to electronic technician – it was a formidable but exciting change for Valda Blanton of Columbia, S.C. “I’d worked clerical in Operator

for BellSouth for 28 years,” says Blanton, 58. She had attempted to advance professionally on several occasions but, “I couldn’t pass the General Qualification Test (Level 2) so I got down on myself and lost confidence,” says Blanton.

Pending staff reductions in 2000, Valda attended classes through the job bank created by the Employment Security PARTNERSHIP, a joint labor/management group staffed by BellSouth and CWA. The classes allowed her to advance professionally.

“CWA is proud of members such as Valda who take advantage of the negotiated services of the PARTNERSHIP to improve their work status,” said Noah Savant, assistant to the vice president, CWA, District 3. “The training packages provided by The Sage Group have proven to be a valuable asset to the Employment Security Partnership.”

**Passing the Test** – After completing a course at the local community college and passing the Level Two exam, Blanton took The Sage Group/Excelsior College’s courses needed to become an electronic technician. The Sage Group/Excelsior College is an Associate member of the Association.

“After I finally passed the Level 2 test I thought, “If I can master this I may as well go on,”” says Blanton. “I had nothing to lose and everything to gain.”

Blanton says her instructors were supportive and the course materials designed so she could build on the skills she already had, plus gain the confidence she needed. The curriculum is based on customized adult-learning techniques, plus easy-to-read-workbooks, hands-on tools, memory aids, modular delivery and classes held at or near employees' place of work.

"The Sage Group/Excelsior College's approach to adult learning is based on real-life events. We work off the base of knowledge each student brings," says Rich Ford, president of The Sage Group, Nashville, Tennessee. "The result is people learn more quickly."

**Moving Up** – During the next year, Blanton worked her way through classes she needed to prepare for and pass the tests for Basic Electricity, Basic Electronics and Digital Communication and Computer Literacy. As a result, she got a job in her new field at BellSouth. Today, she's an electronic technician.



*Courses provided by the Sage Group/Excelsior College helped Valda reach her goal.*

"I love this job," she says. "You could work it for five years and still be learning something new every day."

The advancement has doubled her salary and allowed her to increase contributions to her 401(k). "I kept my seniority which is important when it comes to my work schedule," says Blanton.

"This economy is tough on employees," says Myra Wright, PARTNERSHIP director. "The PARTNERSHIP not only makes it possible to get additional training that may well lead to jobs with higher levels of pay, but it also creates the groundwork essential to being lifelong learners"

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