

# IW takes next step in jobs preparation

'ACT' is tool to be used in seeking job or career change

By **Frederic Lee**  
*Staff writer*

Isle of Wight County leadership and the governor's office launched an effort on Dec. 4 to implement the use of an ACT career placement certificate in the county.

This launch is in conjunction with the county's overall initiative to bolster career preparedness and employment in the county, which is also the impetus for the career and technical training, or CTE, programs at Windsor and Smithfield high schools.

The National Career Readiness Certificate or NCRC is an assessment-based credential that's sourced from the nonprofit organization ACT — the same organization in charge of the American College Test, better known as "the ACT."

The NCRC tests three criteria: workplace documents, applied

math and graphic literacy. A cumulative score of 71 percent is required to pass the assessment.

To take the NCRC costs \$36, and to retake a section costs \$12. In comparison, the SAT costs \$47.50 and the ACT test is \$50, according to respective registration offices/sites.

While the SAT and ACT are facets of a typical college application, the NCRC applies directly to the job market and is geared for adults entering the workforce, in the workforce and career switchers, according to county officials.

Chris Morello, director of Isle of Wight County economic development, said the county is already 20 percent along the way to reaching its goal of becoming an "ACT Work Ready Community." The designation means that a certain percentage of Isle of

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Wight County jobseekers use the certificate in their job search, and that a certain percentage of county employers have expressed knowledge of the NCRC.

Specifically, 111 emerging, 97 transitioning and 16 current jobseekers have to use the NCRC in their search, and 38 employers have to express understanding that the NCRC certifies aptitude in basic workplace skills.

Thirty six more businesses, 71 more transitioning jobseekers and 100 more emerging jobseekers are necessary in order for the county to be qualified as a Work Ready Community, said Isle of Wight County Economic Development

Coordinator Kristi Sutphin.

"Programs at the ACT are those kinds of programs where people can get those good kinds of jobs," said Congressman Bobby Scott D-3rd, adding that businesses in Isle of Wight County are not just competing with those in Norfolk, Chicago and New York but also with businesses in Tokyo, London and all over the world. On the topic of bridging the gap between education and employment, Scott vouched that there's bipartisan support for CTE and apprenticeship programs in Congress.

County Board of Supervisors chairman Rudolph Jefferson praised Isle of Wight County and the school system for their participation in the process

of Isle of Wight County becoming an ACT Work Ready Community.

"We did this because we saw how the initiative could be so important to the county by boosting this effort," said Jefferson, adding, "if we show that we have good, qualified citizens that want to be part of the workforce, then that'll be something where we can advertise and make sure businesses want to come here."

Other speakers at the launch included Del. Emily Brewer, R-64, Isle of Wight County schools assistant superintendent Michael Lombardo, and Dr. Megan Healy and Sara Dunnigan, chief and deputy chief workforce development advisors for Governor Ralph Northam, respectively.