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RCC and Virginia Tech to Offer New Career Training Program for High School Students

Rappahannock Community College (RCC) has joined with Virginia Tech to offer a new career and technical training program, *Promoting Careers in Aquaculture*, for local high school juniors and seniors. The Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula region has a high concentration of employment opportunities in the seafood and shellfish aquaculture industry and is primed for growth over the coming decades.

Promoting Careers in Aquaculture is open to students to in Essex, Gloucester, Lancaster, Mathews, Middlesex, Northumberland, Richmond, and Westmoreland counties. There are excellent employment opportunities for young men and women who wish to work in a hands-on, physically active, and nature-based industry with growing product demand. The shellfish aquaculture industry offers year-round employment for individuals who want to work on the water while living close to home in Virginia's Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula waterfront communities.

Students must apply to the program through their participating school system counseling office. The Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula regions will each have 10 students selected to participate in the program. *Promoting Careers in Aquaculture* consists of three parts, starting in mid-February with an online short course introducing the science and practices of shellfish aquaculture. This will be followed in June by a hands-on, one week summer session hosted at the Warsaw and Glens RCC campuses, respectively.

Upon successful completion of the first two components, students will be placed with a local aquaculture industry partner for an 80-hour summer internship, where they will gain real-world experience in the field. Students will earn a \$1000 stipend upon completion of the program in late July. Industry partners sponsoring paid internships and working with students include, KCB Oyster Holdings, Little Wicomico Oyster Company, Matheson Oyster Company, Oyster Seed Holdings, Rappahannock Oyster Company, Shores and Ruark Seafood, Virginia Institute of Marine Science ABC Lab, and Acuff Aquaculture Center, and the Ward Oyster Company.

Promoting Careers in Aquaculture is funded through an enhanced capacity building grant from the GO Virginia Region 6, Mary Ball Washington Regional Council. This career and technical program has been created through a collaboration between Virginia Tech's Center for Economic and Community Engagement and the Rappahannock Community College Educational

Foundation Inc. (RCCEFI). For more information on this program, contact Hutt Williams, RCC Coordinator of Dual Enrollment at hwilliams@rappahannock.edu or (804)333-6744.

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Since 1970, Rappahannock Community College has been breaking down barriers to education in the Middle Peninsula and Northern Neck. Five degrees, 6 certificates, and 26 career and workforce studies programs are offered through RCC, in addition to nearly 40 guaranteed admissions agreements with colleges and universities across the state and region. For more information, visit rappahannock.edu.