



*For Immediate Release*

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### **BridgeValley's New Brewing Operations Program**

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BridgeValley Community and Technical College (BVCTC) has crafted a brand new brewing operations program, offering its students a chance to learn the art and science of making beer.

BVCTC offers the only two-year degree program in the state in Brewing Operations. Students are also able to participate in opportunities for on-the-job paid apprenticeships thanks to partnerships with the West Virginia Development Office, the US Department of Labor, and local breweries.

Together, the classroom training and on-the-job experience allow students to learn the most they can about the craft brewing industry, according to BVCTC Program Coordinator and Instructor Michael Parsons. Students will learn not only how to make their own beer, but will also learn about the business side of working in the craft brew industry.

"There's a big demand right now," Parsons said. "Just a few years ago we were below ten breweries and now we're at 28 at my last count and there are several more in various stages of opening. The industry is growing very quickly and with that expansion, the industry is needing a trained workforce."

The state's craft brewing industry had a collective economic impact of \$289 million according to the American Brewers Association. The numbers support this expansion close to home as well: it is the second-fastest-growing manufacturing field in the state, according to David L.

Lavender, Apprenticeship Program Coordinator at the West Virginia Development Office. He called the craft brewing industry "recession-proof."

"While brew students once had to travel to expensive programs in far-away states to get industry-trained, this homegrown program is a fresh career pathway for a new generation of cross-trained apprentices into good-paying careers in West Virginia's burgeoning beverage industry," said Lavender. "The unique and dynamic combination of the Brew Ops program and apprenticeship is a deliberate and collaboratively-planned educational and industry pipeline to an exciting career in a growing field."

Students enrolled in the Brewing Operations degree program will learn the technical aspects of brewing, as well as chemistry and microbiology that go into making the perfect batch of beer. Students who complete the program will not only be able to brew their own pale ales, India Pale Ales, lagers, stouts and more, but they will also be able to recognize brew styles; identify off-flavors in their beer and pinpoint where in the process an error was made in order to avoid it in their next batch. Students must be at least 21-years-old to enroll as tasting beer is involved in the coursework.

Additionally, students will learn about marketing, brewery management, distribution and warehouse management.

"There's a tremendous amount of employment potential," Parsons said. "It's geared to a comprehensive program."

Thanks to the partnerships, the Learn and Earn grant, and other state funds that can help the local breweries offset the cost of paying apprentices, BVCTC's brewing operations students have opportunities to work in real breweries while they learn. These students in the apprenticeship program will be working with much larger equipment, and they will be working alongside professionals in the industry.

The program, which launched in Fall 2020, just secured its first full-time apprenticeship with Greenbrier Valley Brewing in Maxwelton, West Virginia. BVCTC student Samantha Fox is the first-ever brewer's apprentice in the state. A masters' recipient and academic advisor at a university, Fox enrolled at the College after deciding to make a career change. She stumbled across the program at BVCTC and said that after her first semester in the Brewing Operations program, she could not be happier or more sure of her choice.

"I really love it. It's definitely a career change," Fox said. "BVCTC in particular, has done a really good job of doing a lot of research about what other programs in other states are offering. They are offering a really competitive program and you walk out of there really knowing a lot. I definitely feel like it will well prepare me for what I need to work in this industry."

The program has an advisory board made up of local brewers and leaders in the industry. This board helps the College stay up to date with trends and demands in craft beer brewing. Their input is incorporated into the curriculum so BVCTC brewing operations students are learning current and relevant information, according to Parsons.

For students debating whether or not to try out the program, Fox said it's a no-brainer.

"It's an opportunity to learn something even if you decide it's not something long-term for you. I think we're on the cusp of something in West Virginia in particular and I think we're pushing boundaries every day. It's really exciting to be a part of that. It is hard work though and it's like learning a new language. It's a lot of work but it's absolutely worth it each and every day."

To learn more about the program and how to enroll, contact Michael Parsons at [Michael.Parsons@BridgeValley.edu](mailto:Michael.Parsons@BridgeValley.edu).

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## About BridgeValley Community and Technical College

BridgeValley Community and Technical College promotes student success, prepares a skilled workforce, and builds tomorrow's leaders by providing access to quality higher education. BridgeValley Community and Technical College will be the college of opportunity for a diverse learner population, offering leading-edge technology, innovative ideas, and dynamic service to our students and our communities. BridgeValley Community and Technical College serves a six-county region including Fayette, Raleigh, Nicholas, Clay, Putnam and Kanawha counties. The college operates two campuses in Montgomery and South Charleston, along with the addition of the new Advanced Technology Center. BridgeValley Community and Technical College is a public institution of higher education independently accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Schools and Colleges and a member of the Community and Technical College System of West Virginia.

For more information about BridgeValley Community and Technical College financial aid opportunities, programs of study, workforce training and community education and events, call (304) 205-6600 or; or check the College's website:

<http://www.bridgevalley.edu>

