

Women graduate from Framingham clean energy initiative



Priscilla Gouldbourne, of Framingham, receives a diploma for the state's first "Successful Women in Clean Energy Initiative" program from SMOC Executive Director David Cuddy, right, program coordinator Suzanne Domesticco, and mentor Jessica Rodrigues, left. Daily News Staff Photo/Art Illman



Elizabeth Hughes, of Upton, hugs her mentor, Nora Cuddy, after receiving a diploma for the state's first "Successful Women in Clean Energy Initiative" program at the SMOC Cafe Monday. Daily News Staff Photo/Art Illman

By Danielle Ameden/Daily News Staff

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FRAMINGHAM – Single mom-of-five Elizabeth Hughes was working part-time for a lawyer and looking for a new career path when a counselor handed her a flyer.

The South Middlesex Opportunity Council received a state grant to pilot the "Successful Women in Clean Energy Initiative" and was offering a free, five-

week training course. Hughes signed up, and was one of 13 women to proudly graduate Monday after gaining skills for sales and marketing jobs.

“I would like to use this as a stepping stone,” Hughes, 43, of Upton, said after earning her diploma. She developed an interest in policy and now dreams of working to make renewable energy more affordable and accessible to all. “I hope to have a long-term career in it.”

Hughes and 12 other women celebrated their accomplishment, cheered on by mentors, instructors and loved ones during a ceremony at SMOC’s headquarters, 7 Bishop St.

The Massachusetts Clean Energy Center will now place the women in six-month paid fellowships. The goal, at the end, is for the women to find good-paying, permanent jobs.

“This is such an important program for us,” Andrew Chabot, the Clean Energy Center’s workforce development program manager, told the graduates. “We are so proud of all of you. We’re excited to see how your fellowship goes with these community employers.”

The Clean Energy Center awarded SMOC \$125,000 to run the program, which taught participants about energy conservation and efficiency—with a focus on solar energy—as well as customer service, employment and computer skills.

SMOC executive director Jim Cuddy congratulated the graduates for taking advantage of the program and trying to better themselves.

Participants are age 24 or older and are either veterans, under/unemployed or have been part of SMOC’s shelter programs and were recruited by the agency.

Priscilla Gouldbourne, 29, of Framingham, was doing per diem mental health work before finding the program, which she hopes puts her on a better track.

“I’m hoping this really takes me to where I need to go,” she said.

Gouldbourne said she wrote a paper on her vision for clean energy in the future and how marketing will play into it, and said solar is “almost a way of life now.”

Beverly Raymond, 54, of Milford, said she had a gap in her job history after taking a break from her work in pharmacy sales to care for her family.

“This was a wonderful bridge to fill that gap and get myself back into a market with double-digit growth and opportunity for sales and marketing,” she said.

Gwenn O’Keefe, component director for skills training at SMOC, said she was proud of the program participants and all the potential they have unleashed.

“Just an amazing group of women,” she said.

The other graduates were Alicia Farnsworth of Blackstone, Anne Gribauskas of Sutton, Lisa Hayes of Worcester, Erica Krenis of Grafton, Adrienne McGlone of Fitchburg, Patricia Prendergast of Whitinsville, Monica Touhey of Ashland, Donelda Turner of Holden, Mary Lou Waite of Franklin, and Wendy Rowland of Upton.

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