

# Independent Tribune

## R3 center to seek out, help Philip Morris employees

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Rowan-Cabarrus Community College will help Philip Morris employees and their families get primed for re-entry into the workforce as their jobs leave Concord.

RCCC's efforts will be aided by the **North Carolina Tobacco Trust Fund Commission's** support of Project Skill-UP, an N.C. Community College System program providing career exploration for tobacco industry workers.

RCCC's R3 Center received \$40,000 of a \$242,000 grant given to community colleges to provide career assistance to people and businesses affected by tobacco

industry declines; namely Philip Morris, who announced last year the relocation of its Concord operations to Richmond, Va., by 2010.

While other community colleges will use the grant to seek out potential clients, the R3 Center will target its money toward short-term training programs for employees and their families, said Keri Allman-Young, R3 Center director.

That's because the center has already established contacts at Philip Morris through the company's human resources department and employee's union.

Allman-Young said the R3 Center is an innovative concept that other community colleges - even four-year universities - don't house on their campuses.

Philip Morris employees and their families would sit down with career development counselors for individual counseling and to discuss education and job opportunities. They'll develop individualized employed plans and become eligible to receive grants for additional education and training.

The R3 Center also offers free workshops, such as "Preparing for Job Loss."

RCCC spokesman Jeff Lowrance said there could be circumstances in which spouses of Philip Morris employee would need to seek training or education opportunities.

"They've been dependent on that one-person income and they may be thinking what can I do to start contributing," echoed Allman-Young.

She said there's a misconception that Philip Morris employees affected by job losses will easily land on their feet given their higher level of education and training.

She said Philip Morris employees could still find themselves in the same boat as laid-off Pillowtex workers who struggled finding jobs at comparable wages and skill levels.

"It's very important to start analyzing and looking into career development now," she said.

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