

A SPECIAL SECTION ABOUT GETTING THE EDUCATION YOU NEED TO GET HIRED AND PAID WELL

# 'Great Jobs KC' Program Helps Adults Looking for New Career

**The KC Scholars program covers the cost of trade school or certification with minimal qualifications**

By Thomas White

The newest program from KC Scholars, Great Jobs KC is meant to help adults in the Kansas City area find new higher paying jobs. The program offers skills training, job placement assistance, and individualized ongoing support.

Here's the kicker: Great Jobs KC covers the entire cost of the certification, job program, or trade school. They'll also help with most common obstacles like childcare, transportation, or getting a G.E.D.

"KC Scholars has always been



(Left) Andre Forbes Jr, with (Right) Earl Martin Phalen, KC Scholars CEO. Fobes says the organization's new Great Jobs KC program, he's getting the training he needs in the field he's always wanted to work. (Photo courtesy of KC Scholars)

known as a scholarship program, but we realized that just because you have a degree it doesn't guarantee you a job making \$45,000 to \$85,000 a year," says KC Scholars

Senior Communications Director Deekay Fox.

To qualify for the program, you need to be 17-years-old or older, live in one of six surrounding counties

### WICHITA RESOURCES

Kansas Works is a locally administered nationally funded program that helps job seekers find job listings, apprenticeships, free digital skills training and certifications, free assessments, mock interviews, and much more. Check out the program at [workforce-ks.com](http://workforce-ks.com)

no deadlines.

Fox says the process is also intentionally straightforward, applicants just need to go to their website [KC-Scholars.com](http://KC-Scholars.com), fill out an application and a brief survey. Then someone from the organization will reach out to assess your interests, skill sets, needs, and goals to get the ball rolling.

The program is less than a year old but already has success stories like Andre Fobes Jr, who was working paycheck to paycheck in a factory but now is working in information technology while he's finishing the self-paced program.

"Thanks to the program I'm not in survival mode anymore," says Forbes. "It gives me a chance to save for my future, and give nice things to my wife and my daughter."

in the Kansas City area, and make less than \$45,000 a year.

Great Jobs KC focuses on high-need and good-paying jobs in Kansas City across four major industries: healthcare, information technology, construction, and manufacturing. Applications are always open with

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## Top 10 Fastest Growing Jobs

**Demand helps drive pay, but demand can only do so much for pay. Higher required skills is by far the dominant driver of increased compensation.**

### Top 10 Fastest Growing Occupations

	Percent change, projected 2021-31	Employment change, projected 2021-31 (in thousands)	Median annual wage, May 2021
Nurse practitioners	45.7%	112.7	\$120,680
Wind turbine service technicians	44.3%	4.9	\$56,260
Ushers, lobby attendants, and ticket takers	40.5%	25.6	\$24,440
Motion picture projectionists	40.3%	0.8	\$29,350
Cooks, restaurant	36.6%	459.9	\$30,010
Data scientists	35.8%	40.5	\$100,910
Athletes and sports competitors	35.7%	5.7	\$77,300
Information security analysts	34.7%	56.5	\$102,600
Statisticians	32.7%	11.2	\$95,570
Umpires, referees, and other sports officials	31.7%	4.2	\$35,860

Note: Wage data are from the Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics program, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

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## Finding the Right Job Means Finding the Right Education

**College, trade school, or apprenticeship: something past high school is needed to succeed in today's economy**

By Thomas White

If you've ever played "The Game of Life" board game where you try to amass a fortune by retirement, you are familiar with these starting choices: get a job out of high school or go get a four-year degree. We all likely heard the same options everywhere growing up, from parents to school counselors.

In the real game of life, there are a dizzying number of choices with no one-size-fits-all career path. But according to the educational nonprofit The Hechinger Report, high schools have tried to make a one-size-fits-all education that makes it tougher for those with only a diploma to be work ready for many jobs.

Since the 1980's high schools have shifted away from an emphasis on vocational training to offer a more broad education to all students. The shift was made to level the playing field allowing high school students equal opportunity where previously, students were siphoned into college, vocational, and home economics tracks based on their race, class, gender, and other considerations. The result is a move towards equality but a lack of focus in any particular area. The shift in high school curriculum means that additional education of *some kind* is needed to find a quality job post-graduation.

The traditional answer has been to pursue a formal four-year education, but there are other paths—that we didn't see in the board game—available to suit different interests, skills, and goals.

One often-overlooked option is an apprenticeship. Apprenticeships offer a combination of on-the-job training and classroom instruction, allowing the opportunity to learn career skills while earning a wage. Apprenticeships are great for people who prefer hands-on learning and need money immediately.

There are also trade school or vocational certification programs, which offer training in specific trades like plumbing, electrician work, HVAC installation, software development, and many other fields that can be completed in a shorter time than a traditional college degree. Additionally, trade school programs often have a high job placement rate, making them a great option for quickly entering the workforce.

Bachelors, masters, professional, and doctoral degree programs are also part of the puzzle. Many high-demand, good-paying jobs can be acquired after getting one of these degrees. Statistically, those with a formal education tend to have higher earnings and lower unemployment rates over time when compared to their peers.



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### Weighing the Pros and Cons of Continuing Education

#### High School Diploma:

##### Pros

If you need to support yourself or your family financially, earning money right away is a temptation that's hard to ignore. Starting a career early can also give a head start on building work experience and professional networking. Some employers like Quicktrip, Costco, and Walmart offer a path to management with time. Many entry-level positions also have on-the-job training that can allow you to acquire skills and knowledge past the high school level.

##### Cons

The career jumpstart does have opportunity costs like limited job options, lower earning potential, and lack of job security. Without additional training, education, licensing, or apprenticeship, often those with only a high school diploma find their career and wages stagnating and they feel stuck.

#### Jobs with diploma only

Sales, food service, landscaping, customer service, data entry, warehouse worker, receptionist

#### Apprenticeship:

##### Pros

Apprenticeships offer hands-on training that allows you to learn and apply practical skills directly in a real-world work setting and earn while you learn. You'll gain work experience while learning on the job, which can help you build your resume. You'll meet and work with professionals in your field, building your professional network. If you perform well during your apprenticeship, you may be offered a full-time job with the company upon completion of the program.

##### Cons

Apprenticeships often pay less than full-time jobs in the same industry, especially in the beginning stages of the program. You'll be expected to work full-time while completing the program requirements, a substantial time commitment that may limit flexibility to pursue other interests or commitments. Depending on the field, a limited number of apprenticeship opportunities may be available in your area or with companies you're interested in working for.

#### Jobs from apprenticeship

Millwright, electrician, mechanic, plumber, HVAC technician, insurance agent, welder, heavy equipment operator, ironworker, utility worker

#### Professional Certification/Associates Degree:

##### Pros

Increased earning potential and career advancement that comes from demonstrating competency in a field. Certifications can make a career switch possible in as little as 16 weeks, while associate degrees are less costly and time-consuming than a four-year degree.

##### Cons

Certifications and associate degrees do have costs; both are time-consuming and require some upfront money. Community college tuition varies but generally hovers around \$100-\$200 per credit hour, while some certificates are quite costly. Many certifications require recertification after some time. Certifications can also be highly specialized, limiting the types of jobs made available, while some types of associate degrees are too broad to qualify applicants for specific jobs.

#### Jobs from professional certification/associates degree

Nurse, physical therapist, software developer, welder, truck driver, wind turbine technician, construction worker, paralegal, dental hygienist



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# Local Job Market Looks Worker Friendly

## Low unemployment means workers have choices

By Thomas White

Both Kansas and Missouri unemployment levels are hovering between 2.4% and 2.9% meaning workers entering the workforce or considering a career change find themselves in the driver's seat.

An unemployment rate at that level is what economists call "full employment" meaning that businesses will have a harder time finding workers; that's where all the 'labor shortage' chatter you may have heard the past few years comes from.

The flip side to a labor shortage is that workers find themselves in a position of power, where finding a good-paying job in some fields is much easier for job seekers.

Those looking to take advantage of the worker-friendly conditions will find opportunities locally. There are good jobs to be found across education levels, according to a study from Georgetown, a bachelors degree isn't needed for a large chunk of the good jobs available in the area. The study found that in Kansas 42% of jobs that pay \$55,000 or more don't require a four-year degree. The same is true for Missouri where 47% of jobs that pay \$55,000 or more don't require a bach-

elors degree.

Locally in the healthcare field, medical assistants, dental hygienists, and radiologic technologists can earn annual salaries ranging from \$35,000 to \$60,000 or more. In the skilled trades, electricians, plumbers, and HVAC technicians can earn annual salaries ranging from \$40,000 to \$70,000 or more. In the technology field, computer network support specialists and web developers can earn annual salaries ranging from \$50,000 to \$70,000 or more.

Kansas Works Vice President and Chief Development Officer Amanda Duncan says there are many job opportunities throughout Kansas, and in Wichita there are openings across sectors.

"We also have a lot of opportunities for skilled trades. Welders are always in demand, machinists, CNC machinists, those are highly paid jobs. And we've got a number of manufacturing companies in our area that need those skills," says Duncan. "Wichita has a strong aviation industry, so there are a lot of opportunities in aviation maintenance, avionics, and other related fields. And we've got some great training programs in those areas as well."

*In Kansas  
42% of jobs  
that pay \$55k  
or higher  
don't require  
a 4-year  
degree and  
in Missouri  
the number  
is slightly  
higher at 47%*



In skilled trades, electricians, plumbers, and HVAC technicians can earn annual salaries ranging from \$40,000 to \$70,000 or more

## The Fastest Growing Job Sectors in Kansas City & Wichita



**Healthcare** - With an aging population and an increased demand for medical services, the healthcare industry in the area is booming. Jobs in healthcare, such as registered nurses, physical therapists, and medical assistants, are expected to see a growth rate of 20% over the next decade in both Kansas and Missouri.

**Technology** - As technology continues to evolve and shape our lives, the Kansas City area

has become a hotbed for technology-based jobs. The region is seeing a surge in demand for software developers, web designers, and cybersecurity professionals. This industry in our area is expected to grow by 15% over the next decade.

**Education** - Teaching, teacher's assistant, administration, and jobs related to education are projected to grow and are, in many places, already understaffed. With the increased

demand for skilled educators, this industry is expected to grow by 10% over the next decade.

**Construction** - The area has seen significant growth in its construction industry and a growing need for skilled construction workers, architects, and engineers. This sector is expected to grow by 8% over the next decade in both Kansas and Missouri.

**Hospitality and Tourism** - With an influx of tourists, the Kansas

City area has become a popular destination for both leisure and business travelers. This has led to a surge in hospitality and tourism-related jobs, such as hotel staff, restaurant workers, and tour guides. This industry is expected to grow by 7% over the next ten years.

*(Kansas Department of Labor, 2022; Missouri Economic Research and Information Center, 2022)*