

SMITH & SOLOMON[®]

TRAINING SOLUTIONS

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BUSINESS AND PUBLIC OFFICIALS GET BEHIND THE WHEEL AS SMITH & SOLOMON OPENS 10TH TRUCK DRIVER TRAINING SCHOOL

NEW CASTLE, DE--Delaware public officials and economic development representatives got a firsthand feel for what it's like to drive a tractor trailer when Smith & Solomon Driver Training unveiled its new training facility recently in New Castle, Delaware.

New Castle County Executive Chris Coons and other county representatives got behind the wheel of a Smith & Solomon tractor, experiencing what students and over-the-road drivers see as they take to state, local and federal roads in Delaware. Delaware is Smith & Solomon's 10th training facility. It opened another yard and classroom facility several months ago in North Bergen, New Jersey, less than a mile from New York City close to the George Washington Bridge and the Port facilities of Newark and Elizabeth. The company also has plans to open additional facilities in New York in the near future.

"Delaware accounts for a good share of the total trucking activity throughout the US—nearly six percent of the average daily truck traffic monitored by the U.S. Transportation Department," noted Will Bowker, executive vice president at Smith & Solomon. "And there is currently a shortage of commercially licensed drivers in Delaware and across the U.S. There is a dramatic need for drivers right now. The average starting salary for a truck driver is \$37,500 a year so it's a good opportunity for someone who does not plan to go to college to make a good living," said Bowker.

The Delaware county executive, workforce representatives from the Delaware Economic Development Office, along with officials from the New Castle County Chamber of Commerce and New Castle Police Community Services, attended the grand opening ceremony unveiling the modern classroom facility and training yard. The facility is located in a newly opened corporate and industrial park near major state and federal highways in Northern Delaware. More than 120 state, county and local officials including clergy, veterans groups and minority organizations were invited to the opening. “We want everyone in the area to know the benefits of trucking and how easy it is to be earning an excellent wage with as little as a month’s training,” said Bowker.

Last year, Smith & Solomon educated and placed 900 drivers who had been receiving state unemployment benefits in other states. At an average of \$37,500 a driver, that adds up to \$33 million in tax paying salaries and the reduction of millions of dollars in state unemployment benefits being paid out each year. The Delaware State Employment & Training Division last week began sending the names of candidates for training which is expected to kick off shortly. They are expected to be the first of many eligible, unemployed candidates who will be productively driving for a living in the near future. For those who are already employed or don’t qualify under the state program, the four week day program or nine-week evening program costs about \$3,500 and guarantees the graduate a paying job.

“We are also interested in training veterans returning from the war in Iraq, particularly those who have been assigned to transportation units,” said Applegate. “Their military experience, transportation training focus and desire to work make for an optimum training and placement situation.”

Smith & Solomon is a 20 year old company with 10 driver training facilities located in Delaware, Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania and New York. The company has successfully trained more than 20,000 individuals for their commercial driver’s licenses for tractor trailer training, straight truck training, passenger endorsement bus training, tractor trailer and bus training, advanced training with night driving and various refresher courses.