Drupal Career Starter Program
Success Story

3...2...1...Liftoff of a promising new career for Caroline Achee — Now a web developer and active member of a growing tech community after her career supporting Shuttle.

In 2011, Caroline Achee became one of the 7,000+ members of the Space Coast's aerospace workforce that was laid off after NASA's Shuttle program was canceled. She said an agonizing goodbye to her rewarding career as a software technical lead for the Shuttle Ground Operation Simulator System and the Simulation Platform Support, which was used to verify launch systems, procedures and launch team readiness before every mission.

It's no surprise that not just any career transition was going to cut it for Caroline. It would be hard to fill the void of professional and personal bonds created by the disbanding of the Shuttle team, and the excitement of space bound launches would also be a hard act to follow. She craved a new direction that promised meaning and gratification. Two years later, she has found her fulfillment, along with a new lifestyle that offers a lot of personal freedom and independence from government budget cuts. Her newfound independence comes thanks to an in-touch Workforce Investment Board with a clear mission that was not risk averse when it came to keeping their local tech talent.

Caroline was among the first class of 18 in DrupalEasy Academy's Drupal Career Starter Program in late 2011. The course was a pilot program, supported by the brave and innovative Brevard Workforce, the WIB for Florida's Space Coast. The workforce board knew that there was no silver bullet to bringing jobs in for the displaced aerospace workforce, but they did learn about careers in open source technologies that could bring work to the region through professionals with training and experience. Drupal is one of those open source technologies.

Drupal is free content management system (meaning there are no licensing fees) that is used to build millions of web sites and has a global community that advances it and each other. It is a scalable, modular framework, running more than 30-percent of successful federal government web sites. Hundreds of Drupal jobs and contracting positions are advertised worldwide, with many remote and virtual positions. Web developer is a growing vocation, and Drupal is a highly sought after talent in the field.

During, and after completing the DCSP, Caroline found the community and excitement she thought she had lost. The voids are filled through the local and global cooperative efforts developing, using and improving the Drupal open source framework. She works with fellow Drupalers using Skype, Internet Relay Chat and co-working now that she is a web developer, entrepreneur and active organizer in Florida's Drupal Community. She's one in almost a million people who are registered at Drupal.org that make up a dynamic, rapidly growing professional sub-culture intent on leveraging the web for enterprise, communications, government and philanthropy.

For Caroline, the DCSP, and the prospects of a career in Drupal was just the challenge she needed to get her going. She found Drupal to be a great framework with a lot of flexibility, and the DCSP to be the foundation she needed to embrace a new career path. After the class, Brevard Workforce was able to underwrite an internship for her, which gave her an understanding of being part of a team of people that did not have face-to-face contact.

Caroline is now actively consulting, building her volume of consulting work and is growing her hourly fees, which are now close to the compensation she earned in aerospace. She is working on creating a company name, and hopes in the future to select a specialty within Drupal to help her target a niche. She aspires to build awesome Drupal sites and help others learn more about Drupal.

For more information on the DCSP and other Drupal training, visit DrupalEasy.com and click on training.