*For Immediate Release*

**3D PrintLife Now Offering New Collar Digital Badges with FDM
3D Printers to Develop Pathways to Engaging, Well-paying Jobs**

**June 28, 2021; Santa Fe, NM:** Eco-friendly materials pioneer 3D PrintLife has joined forces with the New Collar Network to [offer micro-certifications in combination with their 3D Printing products](https://www.3dprintlife.com/certifications) to create “New Collar” career pathways.

Blue Collar jobs have become digital “New Collar” jobs that utilize 21st century tools like 3D Printing, robots, AI, CAD design and other disruptive technologies. While these engaging, well-paying jobs often don’t require a college degree, 3D PrintLife Founder and CEO Buzz Baldwin recognized that specialized training is required for careers as 3D Printing technicians and the New Collar Network program had already developed the trainings 3D PrintLife needed.

Partially funded by US Additive Manufacturing Institute America Makes, New Collar Digital Badges are skill-specific, affordable, short term micro-certifications that open career opportunities across industries. But you can’t learn how to 3D Print without a printer. “Bundling our printers and eco-friendly filament with industry-recognized training made perfect sense for us”, Baldwin says. “Anyone wanting to enter the exciting world of Additive Manufacturing can now purchase a printer from us while also getting up to speed quickly with these user-friendly online digital badges.”

So, the two entities have collaborated to create a one-stop shop special package deal where the average person can find all they need to get started creating at 3DPrintLife.com. The All-in-One set up includes eco-friendly filament, a 3Dprinter, and industry recognized training to learn how to use these incredible machines that previously were only available in SciFi.

Baldwin also sees the digital badges as a key part of their [3D PrintLife Support](https://3dprintlifesupport.com/) program that links 3D Printer users who need help with technicians who have 3D Printing expertise: “We want the 3D PrintLife Support community to have assurance that the tech help they are getting is first rate! We are looking at soon adding technician rankings via the New Collar digital badge program.”

“While everyone was rightly enamored with 3D Printing when it first hit the market, the problem was that once people bought the machines, they struggled to figure out exactly how to use them,” explains Boisvert. “Many schools who either had purchased or had printers gifted to them didn’t have the staff with ability to keep the machines up and running. The same was true in industries from healthcare to manufacturing, so there was a major setback in mainstream adoption of the technology.”

Enter the non-profit [North American Digital Fabrication Alliance [NADFA],](https://newcollarnetwork.com/) created by 10 fab labs, community colleges, and schools to vet curriculum and issue the badges.  [NADFA is a recognized organization in the MIT Fab Lab Network](https://fablabs.io/organizations/north-american-digtial-fabrication-alliance) and now has 14 on-site locations across the USA. Steeped in innovation, the group pivoted during the pandemic and tested both instructor-led and self-paced programs that were a big hit and still utilized NADFA’s Project-based Learning teaching principles.

“There are a lot of new additive manufacturing certifications out there”, Baldwin states, “but in most of them a student reads material or watches a video then takes a test. The New Collar Badges ask the student to identify a problem in their lives at work, school, or home and create a solution to the problem. Documenting the process of solving the problem really demonstrates that the student understands the intricacies of 3D Printing from design to post-processing.”

The importance of the portfolio became clear to Boisvert in her research for a book, [*The New Collar Workforce*](https://store.photonics.com/Product.aspx?SCID=0&SPID=25&SPOID=20)*.* 95% of the 200 employers she interviewed called out problem solving as the top skill they look for in new hires. And project-based learning teaches that skill that is then shared in a portfolio. Whether a hiring director or college admissions staff member, people can find a badge earner’s portfolio online and have assurance in its authenticity via the OpenBadge international standards.

Leina Gries, a Ponoma College student with no CAD experience shares her experience earning a Design for 3D Printing digital badges: “I had no idea just how much I would get out of this digital badge! My design grew and improved in ways I never could have initially predicted.  Now that I have completed my project that solves a problem I was having in my home aquarium, I feel I have a far better understanding of how to create functional, thoughtful, and efficient designs.”

Employers are starting to recognize the value of skills-based workforce training. In 2020, a White House Workforce Task Force headed by IBM’s Ginny Rometty and Apple’s Tim Cook led to an [executive order that the Federal Government’s hiring practices be updated](https://www.usnews.com/news/business/articles/2020-06-25/trump-wants-federal-hiring-to-focus-on-skills-over-degrees) where appropriate to evaluate competencies over degrees. Others are following suit across industries.

Together 3D PrintLife and the New Collar Network’s new collaboration will change the face of workforce training and expand access to the future via 3D Printing for everyone.

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