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HOW
CONTRACTORS
CAN ATTRACT
THE NEXT
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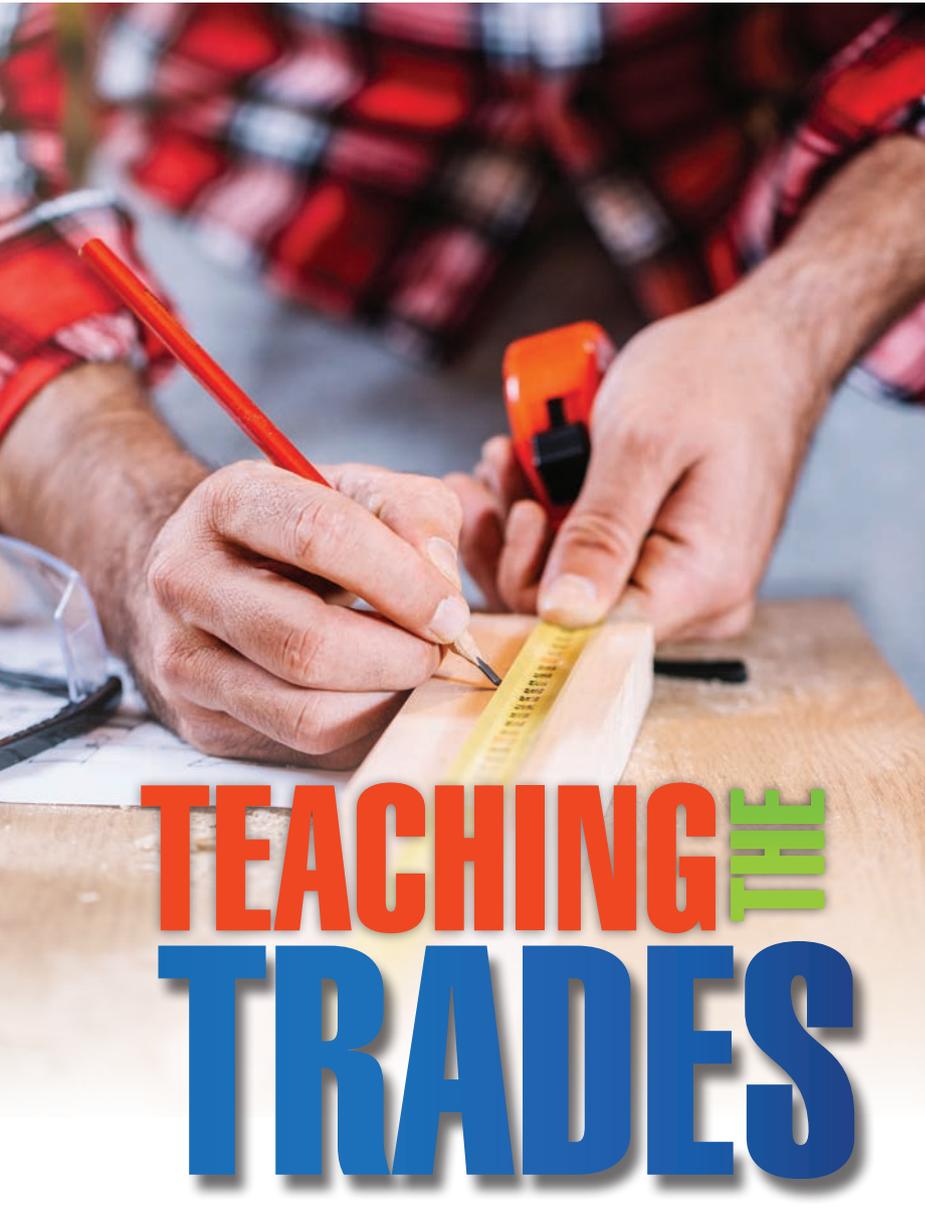


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FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Recruiting Talent Requires Involvement



IT SEEMS EVERY CONTRACTOR has a story about a prospective employee who did not know how to use a tape measure. The unfortunate reality is that stories like these are becoming more common each day. Having young adults with technical, hands-on experience simply showing up looking for work is extremely rare, if not, impossible.

While today's youth are the most technology-savvy generation (sometimes called the Digital Generation), they are vastly unprepared in business practice and operation, not to mention construction site or hands-on knowledge. It's been said this generation may require more training than any other generation in history.

We're at a point when we think it couldn't get much worse. But I'm afraid it could. Unless we all get involved in the development of talent, it likely will. Unfortunately, there's no quick fix.

Contractors are saying there's plenty of work out there but bidding is selective because there aren't enough skilled workers to do the work. As a result, the model for recruiting workers is changing, as this issue of the *Merit Shop Contractor* highlights. Many contractors are assuming a greater responsibility for developing the talent pipeline; opening their minds and going outside of their comfort zones for new recruitment methods.

ABC of Wisconsin is working to assist members on talent preparation with programs such as Wisconsin Youth Apprenticeship. We advocate for you and the industry with regular visits to high schools and a strong partnership with the Wisconsin Technical College System. We've ramped up-work around the state with community based organizations (CBOs) that are providing construction-ready training for individuals hungry for good-paying jobs.

It's likely we will see more contractors moving in this direction, getting more innovative and aggressive in recruitment efforts and a willingness to educate like never before. It all begins with dialogue and engagement. High schools and community-based organizations must know about your needs and interests before they can assist you. Efforts will only be successful through contractor involvement.

Construction is competing with other industries – such as manufacturing and automotive technologies – for talent. Employers in those industries are getting aggressive with the shrinking pool of workers. We need to do even better positioning ourselves as a viable career pathway.

There are prospective employees out there. We just need to work harder as an industry to attract and train them.

— John Mielke

“
WE'RE AT A
POINT WHEN
WE THINK IT
COULDN'T
GET MUCH
WORSE. BUT
I'M AFRAID IT
COULD.”



GROWING TALENT ORGANICALLY

YOUTH

APPRENTICESHIP

Jake Sondreal

transitioned from Youth Apprenticeship to Adult Apprenticeship with Dave Jones, Inc.

By Kyle Schwarm — Marketing & Communications Director, ABC of Wisconsin

High schools are teaming up with ABC members to establish pathways to careers in construction. It's happening in earnest since Youth Apprenticeship (YA) was approved for construction two years ago. Youth Apprenticeship has been around for years in other industry sectors, such as auto and manufacturing, which have seen significant success with

it. It provides students an opportunity to explore careers in various fields to determine if it's the right choice for them.

"With today's competitive workforce, it is important for companies to continue to look outside the box for recruiting workers to fill openings," said Nicole Frank, Human Resources Manager at Dave Jones, Inc. "There just aren't enough

skilled workers out there to take on 'as is.' In order to succeed and to continue to build up your workforce pipeline, it is vital to be open to training your own workers and getting them to where you need them to be."

Youth Apprenticeship is a school-to-work initiative by the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development

Enrolled Youth Apprentices by Career Cluster Area

Construction is lagging behind areas like manufacturing, health and hospitality.





Caleb Warnke

Caleb Warnke transitioned straight from high-school Youth Apprenticeship, to the registered adult apprenticeship program with ABC, just like many youth apprentices do.

designed for high school students interested in combining classroom instruction with onsite occupational experience. On-the-job training follows state-approved specifications while students receive instruction from qualified teachers and skilled worksite mentors. Youth apprentices meet high school graduation requirements and get a head start on a career or even a registered adult apprenticeship program. It can be a big advantage for students who have an idea of what they want to do.

“Youth Apprenticeship provides students a head start in life,” said Travis Ray, Technology Education Teacher at McFarland High School outside Madison. “The opportunities that it provides students are nothing like what can be provided in a classroom.”

This is the path for Caleb Warnke, 19,

who is one of Wisconsin’s first Construction Youth Apprenticeship students to seamlessly take his high-school experience directly into a registered apprenticeship (adult) program.

Warnke said the transition into the adult apprenticeship with ABC was seamless, with the State allowing him to use 450 hours toward his plumbing apprenticeship. “Basically, once I graduated from high school, I went to the ABC meeting to get enrolled. All I had to do was send in my diploma and that day I could actually start logging hours,” Warnke said. “It was a smooth transition. It wasn’t much different from the way you go to work every day.”

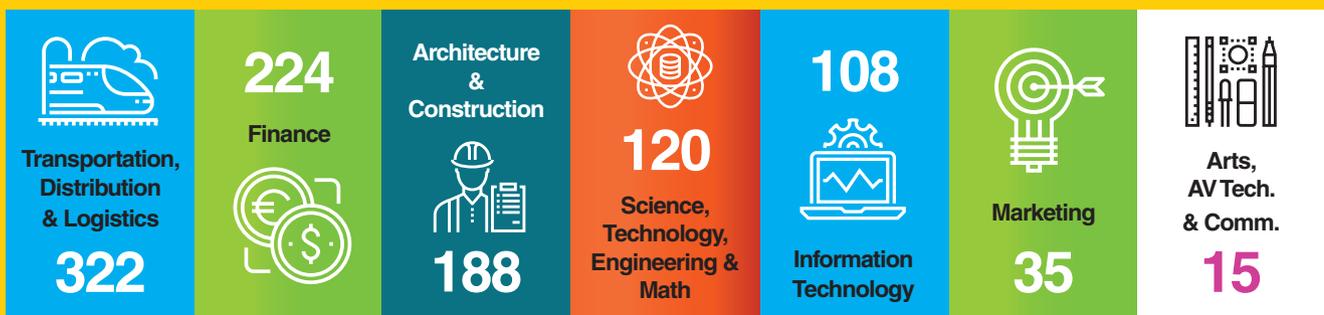
His story is one that could become more common. Warnke attended Oconomowoc High School, which is known for having a good building trades program.

He attended a couple of building trades courses before being allowed on a home building site with other students and his instructor. The first class was more about rough construction and the second was on finishing.

“I kind of got a taste of everything and I knew I wanted to go into either electrical or plumbing,” Warnke said.

Warnke was then exposed to Youth Apprenticeship, which he heard was happening at Waukesha County Technical College (WCTC). He talked about it with his high school building trades teacher. After a few students showed interest in Youth Apprenticeship for construction, the two educational institutions organized the training, while the father of Warnke’s girlfriend hired him on at Van Dorff Plumbing in Neosho.

Warnke had all of his required classes





“YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP PROVIDES STUDENTS A HEAD START IN LIFE. THE OPPORTUNITIES THAT IT PROVIDES STUDENTS ARE NOTHING LIKE WHAT CAN BE PROVIDED IN A CLASSROOM.”

– TRAVIS RAY,
TECHNOLOGY
EDUCATION
TEACHER AT
MCFARLAND
HIGH SCHOOL

taken prior to his senior year, other than a couple of electives that were turned into his Youth Apprenticeship internship, so he didn't attend classes as a senior. Other students in the program had courses to complete for graduation, so they split their days between classroom and jobsite. He would send in his hours worked for each day at Van Dorff Plumbing to his instructor who gave him a grade for each week.

“I loved it. I knew I wanted to do something in the trades and it was an extra year for me to see if this is what I wanted to pursue as a career,” Warnke said. “I would just show up to our shop in the morning and I'd go out with the guys and they'd get me started on something and started showing me the ropes. I got good hands-on experience.”

“Our students enjoy the Youth Apprenticeship experience because it allows them to learn in a different environment than school,” Ray said. “It places emphasis on skills that students need to complete tasks throughout their work day,” Ray said, adding that many students like the paycheck while going to school, too.

According to Ray, this program will not work without contractors taking on youth apprentices. “Without ABC contractors, the Construction Youth Apprenticeship program would not exist; it is as simple as that,” Ray said. “Students need places to work and learn in order for any type of Youth Apprenticeship program to operate. ABC contractors have stepped up and hired these students and provided them with life-changing opportunities.”

“We are very glad that YA is now an option for the construction industry,” said Frank, who has worked with 11 Youth Apprenticeship students to date. “We have embraced Youth Apprenticeship and continue to grow our Youth Apprenticeship program with area high schools.”

Tammy Meyers, Human Resources Manager with Altmann Construction Co.,

Inc. reminds us that high schools have not always been open to construction. “Several years ago, I went knocking on all their doors and I couldn't get anywhere with any of the schools,” Meyers said. “Now, within these past two or three years, it just came together.”

Contractors will tell you that dialogue is critical to getting Youth Apprenticeship started. “We spent a lot of time getting to know a few of our local high schools' curriculum,” said Ashley Sturm, Talent Specialist at Suburban Electrical Engineers/Contractors, Inc. in Appleton. “We found it easier to partner with schools who accept the trades and don't push four-year colleges.”

“It's up to us as contractors to step up to the plate and train them a little more. In order to address the skills gap, contractors need to engage and begin some kind of dialogue,” said Meyers, who is always communicating with Youth Apprenticeship coordinators at four different high schools in central Wisconsin. “Each Youth Apprenticeship is different. Each situation is different. Each school is different. How they handle the program is different.”

Frank says Dave Jones, Inc. also works very closely with the School-to-Work coordinators, Tech Ed instructors, and school counselors at several Madison area high schools, especially as a resource. She explained that her company does some classroom presentations and career fairs, but the high schools and Youth Apprenticeship candidates do most of the heavy lifting.

“There are times when we needed to help, or think outside the box again, with some schools that do not have established processes for these programs,” Frank said. “In those cases, we get the tools out of our tool box and do what we can to connect the right people to the student to help us through this process.”

Contractors say Youth Apprenticeship provides some challenges for students, including work schedule, transporta-

tion, being on a jobsite with adults and remembering to be a student first. Another challenge is that many job sites are a distance from town. Getting them to a job site during the week can be difficult, so some students have to get the bulk of their hours in the summer. Challenges for employers include the ability to provide good mentors who are patient about sharing their talents and remembering that youth apprentices are younger workers who have limits. Contractors also must be conscious about tool restrictions.

Regardless of challenges, the students all seem to have one common denominator: a passion to learn.

"These young men that we've had are so eager to get out there and learn about construction. They have been positive," Meyers said.

"It is a great opportunity for these students to see the real workings of a

construction site and the trades," Frank said. "It builds on their interests, gives them the hands-on experiences they haven't gotten to see in school, and provides a path for them upon graduation from school. Plus, they get paid for it!"

"Some students know right away that they want to enter the construction Youth Apprenticeship program, while others are not sure," said Ray. "As a result, I try to prepare all students for this possibility by certifying my students in NCCER's Core curriculum. ABC has been instrumental in making this certification possible for my students."

"This is a great opportunity for students who are not interested in pursuing a two-year or four-year college program after high school, and especially for those who prefer and excel with working with their hands," said Frank.

Sturm, who has seen both of Suburban's Youth Apprenticeship students

become adult apprentices, agrees. "Absolutely! While this is still new to us, we see a lot of interest from the high schools and students," Sturm said.

Despite Warnke having strong interest and being enrolled in Youth Apprenticeship, he said he was still pushed by his high school to attend a four-year college. Through it all, he would recommend Youth Apprenticeship. "Oh, yeah! I think anybody who's even considering it, it's a great option to see if it's something you could see yourself doing. Even if you have to go to school for half the day, it's valuable time that I'm glad I did, even if I wouldn't have ended up continuing with it."

Hopefully, there will be more students like Warnke, who come into the adult apprenticeship program directly from Youth Apprenticeship with a passion for the trades. "That's the ultimate goal," Meyers said. ABC

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APPRENTICESHIP "A GREAT OPPORTUNITY"

ANDREW LENSINK

"WITH APPRENTICESHIP YOU CAN LEARN WHILE YOU'RE ON THE JOB AND YOU'RE NOT COMING OUT OF IT WITH MASSIVE STUDENT DEBT, SO IT'S A GREAT WAY TO GO."

— ANDY LENSINK

"It's a very in-demand field right now. There's a lot of things going for it that I really like about it." That's how Andy Lensink, an apprentice with De Troye Electric Service, Inc., Oostburg, and a gold medal winner at the 2017 National Craft Competition (NCC), describes his career field.

Andy, 33, had a good childhood, raised in the small town of Oostburg. His mom did secretarial work and his dad worked at the post office. He liked playing sports and building model cars and then messing around with real cars. He always liked mechanical stuff, but he wasn't sure what he wanted to do.

He didn't enter construction out of high school, but he had taken some industrial arts classes. However, these classes were limited. "There wasn't a big push on tech ed, as the high school was pushing four-year universities for everyone," he said.

"The school was always pushing that way. You know, if you want to get a good paying job you should get into a four-year school," he said. "Luckily, my parents didn't push me into that route at all. There were fine with me going to a tech college or whatever I wanted to do. So that was nice."

"When I was done with high school, I wasn't sure where I wanted to go. I did go to college for one year and I found out that I wasn't gonna go down that route."

But he learned about the technical school while he was at college and pursued automotive restoration.

After attending the technical school, he landed a job with an auto restoration firm, but that ended up shutting down. Next, he was hired by a shop that built custom frames and suspensions for vehicles. By 24, he was married and had a couple of kids. Life continued to get hectic for the couple.



"My wife was working as a teacher. We knew we couldn't make it off my salary alone, doing what I was doing. So I started looking into what fields were more reliable, better paying, better benefits, and wound up with De Troye. They're a great company. There's good variety in what I do. We do big refrigeration systems like at grocery stores all the way down to ice machines and HVAC systems. You're not just doing the same thing every day. It's fun."

In addition, it's work that can't be outsourced. Andy said people don't need to have hot rods and fancy cars, but people need to have air conditioning, heating and refrigeration.

"That's never gonna go away. It's nice knowing that there will always be some kind of a job there for you," Andy said.

Now his wife can stay home with three children, ages six, four and two, because they can live off his income alone.

"That's a huge thing," Andy said.

And he can still do his auto hobby on the side.

"It's the best of both worlds. I can do that in my garage and still have a good job every day."

Andy would recommend apprenticeship to anyone who is interested.

"With apprenticeship you can learn while

Apprenticeship has led to a career that allows Andy Lensink to support his family (above) and pursue his passion for automobile restoration (below). Andy competes at the NCC (top left).

you're on the job and you're not coming out of it with massive student debt, so it's a great way to go," Andy said. "If you find a company that's going to let you work for a little bit and then offer you an apprenticeship, I would definitely take it because you're going to get

to learn on the job. You're not going to be stacking up student debt like a lot of people do and you're making money from day one," he said. "And in all the skilled labor fields, they need people, so I don't see a downside to doing it. It's a great opportunity." 

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The Latino Academy of Workforce Development is working closely with ABC Member Stevens Construction to provide construction-ready workers for the jobsite.

CLOSING THE GAP

COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS STAND READY TO HELP ADDRESS CONSTRUCTION SKILLS GAP

By Kyle Schwarm — Marketing & Communications Director, ABC of Wisconsin

Marisol Cardenas is a single mother of three who has struggled to make ends meet for her family. Unable to even afford Christmas gifts for her children, she made several attempts to improve her situation – retail, restaurant, clerical work – but none of these improved her financial situation. She even enrolled at a technical school for aviation mechanics, but the school closed its doors before she could finish her degree.

With ambition on her side, she enrolled in the Forward Service Corporation's TRANS (Transportation Alliance for New Solutions) Program in Summer 2016, a program

designed to provide under-represented individuals the opportunity for entry-level employment in the construction industry. Sponsored by the Department of Transportation, TRANS offers a free, 120-hour training course in the areas of safety, first aid/CPR, blueprint reading, fitness, CDL preparation, flagging and apprenticeship entrance exam preparation.

Just prior to graduating from the program last summer, TRANS was approached by ABC member Zignego Company, interested in partnering with TRANS to hire graduates. Marisol interviewed with Zignego Company and started a new job as a concrete crew member within three weeks.



Elizabeth Roddy, ABC Recruitment & Training Director (right) networks with Lorie Miller, TrANS Coordinator for Dane and Rock Counties (middle) and Tory Latham, Program Coordinator for the YWCA, Madison.

Transportation in Milwaukee.

“Dialogue is critical. Engagement is about finding solutions to our needs. Tell them (CBOs) what you need and they’ll try to do it. These groups can tell you how to get there.”

Roddy agrees. “We need to establish better relationships between our contractor members and CBOs to help recruit the next generation of craft professionals,” Roddy said.

Marisol finished the season with Zignego Company and was called back for a second season. Today, she is proud of her abilities as a crew member and is experiencing financial stability for her family for the first time in her life.

“The Forward Service Corporation is in the business to help people reach their life goals,” said Lorie Miller, TrANS Coordinator for Dane and Rock Counties. “We are always looking for ways to involve contractors and partner agencies with the program.”

Many Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) in Wisconsin have similar programs for connecting diverse populations to construction jobs with 20 to 200 individuals enrolled with each at any one time. ABC of Wisconsin is actively involved with them.

“For some, they haven’t considered this option or maybe didn’t know it existed, but as we look at the construction worker shortage, we know that we can’t do the same thing that we’ve always been doing and diversity is a key component of recruitment,” said Elizabeth Roddy, Recruitment & Training Director at ABC of Wisconsin. Roddy’s position is focused on the workforce needs of ABC of Wisconsin members, which entails diversifying the construction workforce and the ABC Apprenticeship Program. Roddy has been successful in connecting CBOs with our industry.

“We’re working with excellent CBOs, whose priority it is to help people get into construction,” Roddy said. “They give people training, teach them the basics about construction, give them insight into what is expected on a job site, but most importantly, they give them hope for a future where they can make good money, support their families and start a career that can take them many places.”

Everyone wins, because individuals get their foot in the door to great opportunities. Contractors, meanwhile, get badly needed workers. For contractors to win, however, they have to be involved in dialogue with CBOs, according to Michelle Carter, Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Program Chief for the Department of

Roddy has been working to connect contractors with CBOs since 2014. This often includes the need to break down preconceived notions held by both parties. CBOs have come to realize the unions can’t place all their people. With their funding dependent on placement rates, ABC is very critical to their success.

“Members realize CBOs are genuinely interested in placing individuals in jobs, while CBOs are learning our members are interested partners, they are excited to come to interviews and have a willingness to provide jobsite tours,” Roddy said.

Roddy recalls that just a few years ago, ABC was turned away from participation in the Construction Diversity Workforce Alliance (CDWA). Today, Roddy is perceived as a leader in the organization, recently presenting at its annual meeting. Under Roddy’s influence, several CBOs are using the National Center for Construction Education & Research (NCCER, founded by ABC more than 25 years ago) Core Curriculum as the main training content.

To enroll in a program, individuals complete an application, attend an orientation and then get screened for possible enrollment. Contractors need to be assured that the programs prequalify individuals who want to work in construction.

“Our prescreen process is very intense,” Miller said, because this is a big investment in these individuals that sometimes goes as far as helping with clothing and other personal needs. “The prescreening takes into consideration that individuals need to be motivated and dependable.”

“My biggest challenge is getting someone in the workplace,” said Terry Birts of the Urban League of Greater Madison. “But how you keep them there is also important. Usually, there are so many challenges; many related to discipline.” Therefore, the former steamfitter doesn’t put up with a lack of discipline and treats his program as if it were a job. “I would be doing them a disservice if I didn’t treat it like a job.”

Brian McMahon, Deputy Director with Operation Fresh Start in Madison, reminds contractors that referrals can go both ways. "If you have individuals who apply and aren't quite ready for the job, you can do a reverse referral. We can plug them into the system and get them ready for you and get them out on the job," McMahon said.

Most of the CBO work is being done in Madison and Milwaukee, but the entire state is within Roddy's sights. "In the next year or so, I want to move into other areas of the state, but this won't happen overnight. It is about relationship building, working with groups – who have to be open to working with you – going above and beyond and having members stepping up to the plate as needed," Roddy added.

Carla Garces is one of ABC's partners. Garces is Co-Director of the Latino Academy of Workforce Development, which is committed to creating a strong Latino Middle Class in Dane County. Her program looks to construction as a good pathway for family-sustaining jobs, but not without challenges.

"One in four Latinos works in food services in Dane County. For participants deciding to train in something completely different can be intimidating and unfamiliar," Garces said. "We want to show participants what their options are and encourage them to seek out these new careers."

Carla describes Jose, who worked two jobs from sunrise to

midnight for 11 years. Jose's day job had been working in a bakery, making \$11 per hour. His night job was cleaning a car dealer's office five nights a week. He had little time to spend with his family and was doing everything he could to reach the "American Dream."

Jose decided he needed a change. He heard about the Bilingual Construction Program with the Latino Academy. He knew construction offered careers – not just jobs – but he was reluctant to start over and change careers. After talking with a program representative, he was convinced he should take his chances and start something new.

"What convinced him was the support he would get from a bilingual, culturally competent agency," Garces said.

A year later, Jose is working full-time for ABC member Stevens Construction Corp. and has received two raises since he started.

Garces said he is proud of his new career, but perhaps more importantly, "He is confident, happy and has time to spend with his two amazing children and wife."

"ABC is helping change people's lives, getting them on a path to accomplish amazing things," Roddy said. Her vision for the future is for ABC to continue to lead, not follow.

"It's great to see how ABC and its members are leading the way in construction workforce diversity, just like in safety and quality," Roddy said. "I have no doubt that will continue." 

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SHORTENING THE LEARNING CURVE

*NEW UW-PLATTEVILLE LAB PROVIDES
ADVANCED PREPARATION FOR STUDENTS*

By Kyle Schwarm — Marketing & Communications Director, ABC of Wisconsin

How do you educate 30 inexperienced college kids to a point where they will become good construction project managers? You provide them a real-world construction site with skid steers, cranes and excavators.

This is what the Building Construction Management and Building Construction Safety Management programs at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville are doing with the new Commercial Construction

Laboratory. It's a two-story, all-steel super structure, designed to code by a professional engineering company.

"It's becoming a giant erector set that goes up every semester and it comes back down," said program Co-director Mark Albers, who conceptualized the lab. "It's a consistent, controlled learning experience for our students," said Albers, who took over the Associate Professor position in the Building

Construction Management program several years ago and was somewhat dismayed that the laboratory was merely residential. He said that was educational, but with 98 percent of his graduates working in commercial construction, he knew the emphasis needed to change.

"I saw how starkly inexperienced the students were. Half of the students had little hands-on experience. They had never poured concrete. They had never seen how a hole was drilled or how a steel beam is attached with welding or bolting," Albers said. "I noticed that a lot of the students didn't know what I was talking about, no matter how simple I had boiled it down. This is a desire to try to address that."



Contactors have applauded a new UW-Platteville program that ensures its students gain hands-on experience in multiple construction disciplines.

After toying with the idea for ten years, he threw it on the table with his program's advisory council, a group of mostly commercial contractors who advise on required curriculum, software, skills, etc., for graduates.

"It was an overwhelming response from the contractors. They practically applauded," Albers said. The responses were, "That's exactly what we need."

New construction management employees are a big investment that can take three years to make it through the learning curve. With this lab, graduates are paying their way for contractors by year two.

"We're trying to shorten the return on their [contractors'] investment in our graduates. It's a shorter window from once they hire them to where they're very productive," Albers said. "Within a year, they're managing projects as opposed to investing three years of just teaching them the very basics."

"Students are always able to ask a question or start a discussion without the worry of interfering or slowing down a schedule," said Lidia Frias, a senior from Iowa, Wisconsin. "The goal is to make sure we get the most out of our semester on site, while emphasizing safety and proper technique."

"It's kind of forcing them [students] to understand it's not just about looking at a set of drawings and coming up with an estimate, there's a lot of skill that goes into this," Albers said.

The Commercial Construction Laboratory is the only known program in the U.S. where the students get real experience on an actual commercial construction site. But it doesn't just benefit the construction management students, it benefits the construction safety management students under the direction of Lab Co-Director and Assistant Professor Mark Miner, who are

able to learn and coach the management students on the real dangers of construction. The two programs are co-dependent on the Lab.

"We're nothing in this construction program without the Safety Program and vice versa. If we take away this lab from the safety people, we're just another safety program that knows the OSHA book and that's it," Albers said.

Having the idea for the lab was one thing. Making it happen was something entirely different, with many significant obstacles looming, including no land, money or heavy equipment to move materials around.

"It's not a time within the UW or in education to be asking for funding, especially for anything new," Albers said. "So that was one of the first obstacles. I was told, 'We think this is a great idea, but we don't see any funding coming your way to ever implement this.'"

“WE’RE TRYING TO SHORTEN THE RETURN ON THEIR [CONTRACTORS’] INVESTMENT IN OUR GRADUATES.”

Albers began to network and make cold calls. He met with a local businessman over a couple of donuts and the next thing he knew he had a lease on four acres of land for four years for a dollar. Next, he was able to secure the use of a forklift, crane and skid steers. Many contributions came from ABC members. Once the university saw Albers’ progress, they provided a few dollars to assist the program. That’s where the program stands now.

After a couple of semesters, the lack of revenue will become a challenge. Donations are drying up at a time when the program will get more complex. Albers would like the industry to help sustain the program.

“We’ve probably tapped out the local investments that we can. Going forward now, we would like other contractors who feel this has some benefit to them to be open to the idea of investing in this program,” Albers said.

The pieces will all be fabricated, so that phase won’t be required each semester, but Albers wants to allow students to learn more about erecting and installing. “Then we can jump inside and we can start putting together mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems that are just mock-up systems,” Albers said.

Albers said it would be ideal if contractors could commit \$1,000 each for four years. If he could get 100 contractors on board, the program could assume some expenses for equipment currently on loan. He said contractors could also help by donating materials or coming in and speaking to a class for an hour.

As far as the students taking on the new lab, they have been receptive, even though it requires them to endure some hardship.

“The only doubters we had were the ones who did not have enough experience outside



and knowing that you can work in the cold if you are dressed for it. We had to talk about that. What you need to work out in the cold and be productive; not just stand out here and shiver. In my opinion, they’re all better people for it,” Albers said.

Student Brody Beard said the program has been very beneficial to students.

“Actually doing the building and learning how the process

works for putting up [the] structure is amazing,” Beard, a senior from Dixon, Illinois, said. “I think every student should have these hands-on experiences. Hands-on work is truly the best form of education for a BCM/BCSM student,” he added.

“They truly appreciate the trades when they get out of here. Our goal is not to make them tradesmen,” Albers said. “They don’t have to be able to do finish concrete or be a welder, but they’ll be exposed to all those things and they’ll appreciate the guys out in the field.”

“My appreciation for not only field workers, but also for everyone involved in scheduling and coordinating construction, has grown immensely,” said Frias. “Our lab is the perfect setup for me and the other students to have a chance to get our hands dirty in an environment built for learning. It is a great feeling knowing that I get to contribute to something tangible and I am excited to see how the lab will grow in the future.”

Albers said the program is valuable for students who don’t have experience or are not academic superstars. They get to layout the structure, deal with excavation and footings and learn from their mistakes. It’s even better for those with some experience.

“They come out here and they have more knowledge and this is where they excel,” Albers said. “They realize they have a set of skills they didn’t realize are valuable. If they choose to lead, they just bloom out here.” ABC

To contribute to the UW-P Commercial Construction Lab, contact Mark Albers at albers@uwplatt.edu or 608-342-1154.

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Gov. Scott Walker addresses attendees at AmeriLux International in De Pere, where Keller, Inc., is building a major expansion.

WALKER SIGNS PLA NEUTRALITY BILL

IT'S ABOUT
EMPOWERING
THE
TAXPAYERS TO
MAKE SURE
THEY GET THE
BEST DEAL
POSSIBLE.

Governor Scott Walker congratulated Associated Builders & Contractors and other groups for work on Senate Bill 3, the Project Labor Agreement (PLA) Neutrality Bill, as he signed the free enterprise, open competition measure on Monday, April 17.

"We appreciate the entire team here from Northeast Wisconsin, as well as all the different groups, from Associated Builders and Contractors of Wisconsin, from the National Federation of Independent Businesses, from Americans for Prosperity, to all the others here today," Walker said.

The Governor also thanked Senator Leah Vukmir and State Representative Rob Hutton, authors of the bill that prohibits governmental entities from entering into taxpayer-funded, union-only project labor agreements. This non-discrimination measure ensures all contractors – and eight in ten workers who choose not to belong to organized labor unions – will have a fair shot at performing work paid for by taxpayers.

"This ensures that contracts, going forward, and works being done on infrastructure and all public projects, are being done in a way that

Gov. Scott Walker signs the Project Labor Agreement Neutrality Bill on April 17.



provides maximum value – both quality and value – for the taxpayers of this state,” Walker said. “It’s really pro-taxpayer, both statewide and by individual jurisdiction; cities, towns, villages and schools all over the state. It’s about empowering the taxpayers to make sure they get the best deal possible.”

The signing took place at AmeriLux International in De Pere, site of a major building expansion by ABC member Keller, Inc., Kaukauna. Steve Klessig of Keller, Inc. described this as a celebration. “When a blue state can sign legislation like this, we’re setting an example for the rest of the country that we can make a difference,” said the former ABC of Wisconsin Chair.

ABC of Wisconsin’s current Chair, Jay Zahn, said the difference happens when people work together. “This is what associations are all about. There were a lot of people involved in getting this done. Clearly, it takes a group and with numbers, you can get things accomplished,” Zahn said.

ABC of Wisconsin President John Mielke said it also takes commitment by legislators. “Wisconsin’s merit construction community thanks Governor Walker, Senator Leah Vukmir, Representative Rob Hutton, the Legislature and its leadership for supporting common sense policy. As Governor Walker said today, it’s a great day for Wisconsin taxpayers and open competition,” Mielke said.

According to a series of academic studies, PLAs drive up the cost of construction between 12 and 18 percent. PLAs often limit competition by imposing undue regulations or circumstances that would put merit contractors at a disadvantage. For instance, a common provision is only hiring employees from the local union hall, paying into union pension funds when employees may never receive a union pension benefit, recognizing unions as the representative of employees on that job and obeying union apprenticeship and other work rules. With stipulations that would require contractors to maintain double the workforce and pay double the retirement benefits, most merit contractors decline to submit bids in these situations. 

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NEW MEMBERS

For membership information contact **Bill Stranberg**,
Membership Director – Associated Builders & Contractors of WI – 608-244-5883

MARCH 2017 NEW MEMBERS

• Braun Concrete & Excavating Services Inc.

Michael Lindquist

609 W. South St

Loyal, WI 54446

Phone: (715) 255-8355

Description: Site Work/Concrete Contractor

Sponsor: Scott Boson, The Boson Company

Beam Club Members-to-date: 1

• Charterpoint Wealth Strategies

Dan Odenbach

700 N 3rd St., Suite 202A

La Crosse, WI 54601

Phone: (608) 785-0515

Description: Financial Advisor/Planning

Sponsor: Eric Bauer, Brickl Bros., Inc.

Beam Club Members-to-date: 14.5

• Craftmaster Painting LLC

Mike Schneble

11113 Forest Home Ave

Franklin, WI 53132

Phone: (414) 344-2200

Description: Finishing Contractor

Sponsor: Brandon Applebee, Altius Building Company

Beam Club Members-to-date: 1

• H&H Plumbing Services, Inc.

Doug Olsen

3201 Latham Drive

Madison, WI 53713

Phone: (608) 273-4464

Description: Mechanical Contractor

Sponsor: Dan Bertler, Supreme Structures, Inc.

Beam Club Members-to-date: 12

• Pro Serv Plumbing, Heating Cooling LLC

Jon Weis

11830 W. Ripley Ave

Wauwatosa, WI 53226

Phone: (414) 771-7885

Description: Mechanical Contractor

Sponsor: Jay Zahn, R&R Insurance Services, Inc.

Beam Club Members-to-date: 29

• Todd's Redi-Mix Concrete

Todd Widdes

1770 23rd Street

Rice Lake, WI 54868

Phone: (715) 234-2626

Description: Concrete/Redi-Mix Supplier

Sponsor: Chris Mlejnek, Northwest Builders, Inc.

Beam Club Members-to-date: 8

APRIL 2017 NEW MEMBERS

• Circuit Masters Electric

Richard Lebakken

502 W. Red Pine Cir

Dousman, WI 53118

Phone: (262) 784-2333

Description: Electrical Contractor

Sponsor: Robb Steiner, Steiner Electric, Inc.

Beam Club Members-to-date: 11

• Drexel Building Supply

Dan Smith

PO Box 510

Campbellsport, WI 53010

Phone: (920) 533-4412

Description: Building Materials Supplier

Sponsor: Stevie Mclay, ULG Skilled Trades

Beam Club Members-to-date: 1

• Gaber Electric, Inc.

Tom Gaber

1538 N. Stevens St, PO Box 881

Rhineland, WI 54501

Phone: (715) 362-6272

Description: Electrical Contractor

Sponsor: Tammy Meyers, Altmann Construction Co., Inc.

Beam Club Members-to-date: 11



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www.linkedin.com/company/abc-of-wisconsin



twitter.com/ABCofWisconsin

• LLC Electric

Joseph Schuller

3652 S. 60th St.

Milwaukee, WI 53220

Phone: (414) 405-0320

Description: Electrical Contractor

Sponsor: Jay Zahn, R&R Insurance Services, Inc.
Beam Club Members-to-date: 30

• Parkland Electric, Inc.

Dennis Dockter

400 Travid Lane Ste 29

Waukesha, WI 53189

Phone: (262) 549-4554

Description: Electrical Contractor

Sponsor: Don Gumieny, Electrical Concepts, Inc.
Beam Club Members-to-date: 30



EVENT REMINDERS

Brewers Game

May 12, Milwaukee

Apprentice Graduation Banquet

May 12, Wisconsin Dells

Meet the Generals

May 24, Green Bay

Golf Scramble

June 14, Cottage Grove

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