

Section 3 WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Absher Construction Company has worked on projects with Section 3 community workforce requirements for over sixteen years. One such project was with the Tacoma Housing Authority Bay Terrace project located in Tacoma Washington. There our community plan included Section 3 Employment Preference, Section 3 Business Program, Women and Minority Business goals, and apprenticeship utilization

We partnered with WorkForce Central to help establish a pilot pre-apprentice Construction Academy for the project. Together, we identified and selected individuals to receive pre-apprenticeship training. Upon completion of the academy, graduates were placed on a ready-to-work list for the project.

Recruitment for the academy was conducted at Tacoma Housing Authority properties and surrounding Hilltop communities. Interested residents were required to attend an information session, complete a JobFit assessment, and attend a one-week training readiness class that covered topics such as teambuilding, time management, professional communication, and interview skills. Students were also asked to complete a hands-on-assessment. There were three work stations that included moving cinder blocks, shoveling and wheel barrowing sand, and a mixed station of ladder work, plywood and rebar. Students were evaluated on their ability to follow basic instructions, maintaining a good attitude during the process, teamwork and listening skills.

Those candidates who successfully passed the initial screening were invited to participate in an industry panel interview with Advisory Board Members. A total of 17 applicants were selected to participate in the academy. The pre-apprenticeship academy was a ten-week training, scheduled from Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

The curriculum was taught in partnership with Bates Technical College and included the following topics:

- Industry Awareness
- Tools & Materials
- Blueprint Reading
- Applied Math for Construction
- Heritage of the American Worker
- Green Construction
- Financial Literacy
- Workplace Diversity
- Trades Test Prep (ASSET, City of Tacoma: Power, Water, Public Utilities)
- Fitness and Nutrition
- Practical Applications
- Job Site Tours/Field Trips/Guest Speakers

Participants also received free OSHA 10, CPR & first aid, flagging, forklift, and scaffold user certifications. Graduates from the academy received three college credits towards a technical degree at Bates Technical College.

The advisory team focused on several learning outcomes that resulted in the success of the program. Students gained life skills such as the importance of punctuality, perseverance, positive attitude, and work ethic that will ensure job success on a construction site. In addition to life skills, students learned specific skills like practice and use of hand tools, basic power tools, and material identification. The level of skills taught provided each student with the ability to meet state-approved construction trades apprenticeship program requirements, including skills to pass the Carpenter's Safety and Orientation Test.

Since graduating in May 2013, three individuals were accepted into the Laborers' training program and are now signed up as members of Local 252. One individual was assisted with reinstatement of membership at Local 252. Two individuals are being assisted with Washington State Driver's license reinstatement and three individuals have applied to the Carpenters' apprenticeship program. Two graduates are working on the Bay Terrace project for Absher, and one was hired for a local earthwork firm located in Tacoma.

Due to the enormous success of the academy, the partners agreed that pre-apprentice programs are an excellent way of introducing target resident population to the trades and providing them with preliminary orientation, assessments, and future employment opportunities. Thus, established an on-going program what is now referred to as the Tools Center.

