



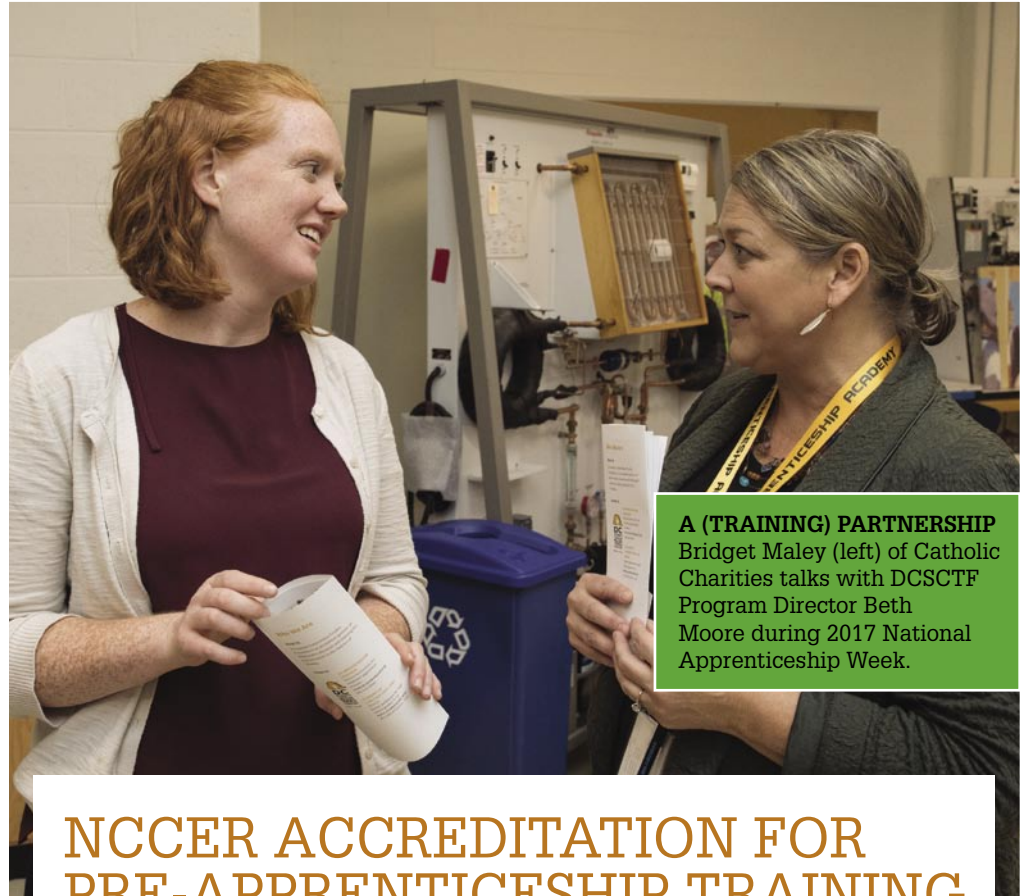
REV. STEPHEN E. TUCKER
President, JOBS Coalition

IN 2018, YOU TOO CAN SEE THE FOREST AND THE TREES

Adversity. Challenge. Change. In 2017, the JOBS Coalition—like much of the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area—experienced all three. The year brought a change in the administration with a domino effect on the political, economic and social climate.

By Rev. Stephen E. Tucker

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A (TRAINING) PARTNERSHIP
Bridget Maley (left) of Catholic Charities talks with DCSCTF Program Director Beth Moore during 2017 National Apprenticeship Week.

NCCER ACCREDITATION FOR PRE-APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING A Key to Success in Construction Trades

Ask Valarie Hunt about the construction trade opportunities the UPO Workforce Institute provides those it serves, and she easily offers up a former student as an exemplar of success. This single mom of one was on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), didn't have a home and knew she wanted off the assistance program, recalls Hunt. After completing UPO's professional building maintenance course, receiving industry-recognized certification and securing affordable housing, this young woman opened her own business contracting carpentry and other skilled work in the District of Columbia. She ultimately moved on to Texas to flip houses.

By Arnesa A. Howell

“These are entrepreneurship vocational tracks that can help you develop and start your own construction business,” says Hunt, division director of the United Planning Organization’s Workforce Institute. In this scenario, it’s the portability of accreditation from the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) that proved key to this graduate’s life trajectory.

“She really is the holistic version of what we want to see happen for our clients—she blossomed,” Hunt adds.

The UPO Workforce Institute is one of two

primary training partners of the D.C. Students Construction Trades Foundation (DCSCTF), which works in part to make adult skilled trade education and training accessible to District residents. Through its relationship with UPO and its second training partner Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington, DCSCTF is providing critical support to select nonprofits: NCCER accreditation for pre-apprenticeship training.

“They are meeting all the standards for reaching industry-recognized credentials,” says Foundation Program Director Beth

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MAKING STRIDES: JOBS COALITION ACCOMPLISHMENTS



While raising awareness of workforce challenges and potential barriers to employment, the JOBS Coalition and its members have combined their resources and industry expertise to achieve the following results:

- Built the Bellevue Resource Center, a program facility serving the hard-to-reach, hard-to-employ, and returning ex-offender populations. The Center was completed on September 30, 2003.
- Guided the creation of the Construction & Design Academy at Cardozo, providing District students access, training, and preparation for careers in the construction industry and trades after graduation. The Academy officially opened in September 2005. □

A mid legislative turmoil and economic shifts, many working class people are facing a wave of challenges with life-altering possibilities. The future of employment and quality affordable housing all remain uncertain. The poor and lower middle classes are especially vulnerable in these areas, and therefore, must be given priority.

Together, we must face these challenges head-on, one-by-one, through genuine collaboration, or risk being left behind. Jobs are how we provide for our families, build our livelihoods and contribute to the economic health of this country. But the current economic landscape raises concerns that job opportunities are slipping away. The latest numbers from the Bureau of Labor Statistics paint a picture we can't afford to ignore.

Nationwide, the unemployment rate remains steady at 4.1 percent, with 6.6 million persons unemployed. Construction, for example, was among the industries experiencing gains, adding 30,000 jobs in December—most in specialty trades, according to BLS. Promising, but this data also shows that African-Americans and Hispanics lead in the percentage of those unemployed, at 6.8 percent and 4.9 percent, respectively. So, there's still work to be done.

In a city where some market analysis puts the African-American population close to 50 percent, these findings are noteworthy. Workforce development, with an emphasis on job training and education, is the opportunity needed to close the skills gap and bring viable candidates into a competitive job market like that of the District of Columbia. This includes an increased investment in apprenticeship training programs to give alternative workforce pathways. Residents must be ready for these changes and new prospects.

For example, in October 2017, D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser announced that the District had submitted its proposal to become the future second home of Amazon. By January, D.C. ranked among the finalists. If successful in this bid, our city could reportedly expect up to 50,000 jobs being added to its local economy—both promising and exciting for residents.

Washingtonians, too, must have a seat at the table. And our elected leadership citywide must remain steadfast in providing District residents with access to well-paying jobs and affordable housing that is also quality housing. There is an immense need for trained employees, and this is where the JOBS Coalition can play a pivotal role.

Moving forward, we plan to continue our outreach and partnerships to build stronger apprenticeship training and job placement

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HORIZON OF OPPORTUNITY
Student Mehki McClam, who aspires for certification in electrical after graduation, signs up to learn about UPO opportunities at the National Apprenticeship Week Open House at IDEA PCS.

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Moore. “And that’s the reason we are partnering with them—to make sure that their employees, upon completing training, are leaving work ready.”

Mark Drury, vice president of business development at Rockville, Md.-based Shapiro & Duncan, affirms that the strength in the NCCER credentialing is its portability and universal acceptance. “It gives a certain level of comfort and guarantee to any company anywhere,” he says. “All your credentials are kept in a national database, so a future or current employer can pull them up to validate how well you’ve done and what you’ve learned.” The level of rigor in the coursework lays the foundation for completing an apprenticeship program, getting a journeyman’s license, and becoming a master of the trade, he says.

As a District-based, NCCER-accredited sponsor working with a cross-section of the population, the Foundation is in a unique position to help those looking to secure a foothold in the construction trades industry, according to Moore. And that journey begins with the training partners.

The Building Careers Academy: A New Day

Once a freestanding program, the Building Careers Academy (or BCA) is now part of the Workforce Institute (although a physical site remains at Girard Street in Northeast). Here, at the construction trade center, trainings are currently held in the areas of telecommunications, electrical and professional building maintenance—with a “hint of carpentry,” says Hunt, noting that plumbing is no longer being offered and may be replaced in the future.

The target demographic includes men and

women with a “sliver” of employment—either low income or underemployed—but without the skill set to move forward, and upward. “They need a vocational track to help beef up a skill set to do the job,” says Hunt.

And the goal for those participating in the 12-week construction prong of the UPO Workforce Institute? “To assist individuals to receive national certifications in high demand labor markets that lead to employment that is at—or above—minimum wage, resulting in a pathway to the middle class,” according to Hunt.

Enrollment criteria include being at least 18 years of age and meeting income thresholds, with funding for District residents under a community service block grant. Other prerequisites include drug screening and criminal background check, although Hunt stresses that as a second chance organization “all of our certifications and vocational tracks are criminal-justice forgiving.”

The Institute serves a large reentry population, and Hunt explains the vocational and construction-related trainings are designed to ensure each prospective student is prepared to academically handle the curriculum. Plus, have the support needed to either advance to an apprenticeship or directly into employment.

Still, she admits it can be challenging serving populations that face academic hurdles. “If you live in the inner city and come from a low-class neighborhood, a lot of times you are passed through,” Hunt says, noting these young people are then ill equipped for future opportunities. “When that happens, you do a disservice to the students.”

Pathways in Green Construction

For Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of

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POSING WITH A PURPOSE
The Class of 2015 readies for the journey ahead after graduating from the Catholic Charities' Green Pre-apprenticeship Construction Program.

PHOTO COURTESY: CATHOLIC CHARITIES

NCCER Accreditation *Continued from page 2*
Washington, a primary goal is to provide its diverse student population pursuing certification in green construction with the advanced skills and training needed to find sustainable employment after graduation, according to Julieta Machado, director of immigrant support service at Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington. “We’re here to introduce students to a program in which they can grow and continue to specialize,” she says. “With so many construction jobs in the area and so very few qualified skilled people in D.C. to apply for these jobs, it’s important to get certification.”

This 10-week Green Pre-apprenticeship Construction Program focuses on “green” building, including weatherization, recycling and how to dispose of materials that are not safe for the environment. Ultimately, the program prepares each graduate to gain an entry-level construction job,

then move forward to an apprenticeship program or seek out other opportunities within the company, or start a business.

The program largely serves District residents, and is especially important because it gives individuals who may not have an opportunity to go off to college or another alternative a successful career pathway, adds Bridget Maley, program manager of Enterprise Education and Employment at Catholic Charities.

As part of its four-year, ongoing partnership with the Foundation, the program teaches pre-apprenticeship construction using the NCCER curriculum. “The Foundation provides extra training, is diligent in the issuing of certificates and is a wonderful resource of information on the curriculum, construction and jobs,” says Machado.

Maley stresses the value of receiving NCCER certification, and notes the program also helps im-

prove student math skills, and indirectly, literacy skills. “And for immigrants and refugees, it’s a very important program because many of them come from their home countries with construction experience but no certification,” adds Machado.

While the Green Pre-apprenticeship Construction Program has diversified from its origins of largely serving immigrants and refugees from Latin America, says Machado, it still helps all in need—providing a range of support services. Workforce development services include resume development, interview preparation and online application assistance, plus connecting students with employers through open house sessions. Meanwhile, critical case management services assist with housing, childcare and other issues that can be a challenge to a student continuing in the program.

Is D.C. (Workforce) Ready?

Within the District, there has long been a tug-of-war between the value of career and technical education, and its blue-collar cachet. However, Hunt believes the city overall understands the necessity of workforce development, readiness and vocational training.

“It needs to be an option that is supported for folks who are able to graduate from high school or get a GED, if you want to move the District’s reduction in poverty,” Hunt stresses. “We need to bring vocational training back into high school if not middle school. We need to start prepping our young minds early enough to show them the different levels of career paths.” □

JOBS Coalition Pathways

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programs with a three-pronged strategy:

1. Collaborating with Jobs Partnership Greater Washington to provide training for unemployed, underemployed and hard-to-serve citizens, including returning citizens.
2. Continuing support of the Academy of Construction and Design's highly successful curriculum and apprenticeship training program at the IDEA Public Charter School. The Academy teaches construction math, blueprint reading, mechanical drawing, computer applications, carpentry and other trades while motivating students to earn technical and safety certifications.
3. Collaborating with the Department of Employment Services (DOES) to find better ways to deliver services to District residents.

These partnerships would provide job-ready applicants from a broader spectrum of District residents, to include high school graduates and dropouts, returning citizens at all age levels, and those looking to re-enter the workforce after absences.

While we do not know whether the District will ultimately win the bid for the new Amazon headquarters or if there's a Plan B if not chosen, the possibility is an important conversation starter for a city that is evolving economically.

It is a powerful experience to see *both* the forest *and* the trees in these times. If the forest is this metropolitan D.C. area filled with a vast number of opportunities driving population growth and change, then the trees are the native District residents. Those from this city cannot be overlooked, and equally deserve the right to qualify for these new opportunities on the horizon. □

JOBS COALITION PROMISES

- Provide opportunities for District residents to secure gainful employment.
- Remove barriers that prevent meaningful employment.
- Provide educational and training opportunities for all District residents interested in pursuing careers in various industries and trades.
- Work toward the creation of a comprehensive, fair, and more open system of training and hiring the underserved, unemployed and returning ex-offenders.
- Ensure that the training and educational skills being taught are relevant to the job market of today and tomorrow.
- Engage elected and appointed officials to support legislation and maintain appropriate oversight to ensure gainful employment for District residents, including the underserved, unemployed, and returning ex-offenders.

JOBS COALITION MISSION STATEMENT

We will work together to develop a long-term strategy that creates an environment where aspiring District residents will have unprecedented opportunity to succeed. We strive to create a fair and open system, supported by government, industry, employers and the education and faith-based communities, which seeks to properly train today's apprentices while making an unparalleled commitment to educating students and others not yet in the workforce.



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