



ON A MISSION ACAD student Makiya Johnson talks internships with Shapiro & Duncan recruiter Jesus Yactayo.

ACAD JOB FAIR OPENS DOORWAY OF OPPORTUNITY FOR IDEA STUDENTS

Makiya Johnson is a busy student. As a junior at the Academy of Construction and Design at IDEA Public Charter School, she traveled to Jamaica this year to help build a school. Before that, she helped construct a micro house and led Department of Education and city officials on an official tour of the Academy and its many projects. And now, she's packaged up that experience in hopes of getting an internship.

By Arnesa A. Howell

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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. □



ALL THE BUZZ The electrical apprentices of the D.C. Apprenticeship Academy's Class of 2018

SIMPLY THE BEST D.C. Apprenticeship Academy Honors Class of 2018

Graduating from the D.C. Apprenticeship Academy has a different meaning to each student. For one electrical apprentice, completing the training program means embarking on a new professional journey. And for another, the accomplishment is a pathway of opportunity for him and his family. Still, no matter the outlook, the Academy is changing lives.

By Arnesa A. Howell

“It feels good after four years,” says Troy Polinsky with a laugh. As one of the eight electrical trades grads from the D.C. Apprenticeship Academy’s Class of 2018, Polinsky is looking forward to grabbing the next golden ring: a journeyman’s license in the District. “It’s exciting,” he says of the experience.

The D.C. Apprenticeship Academy offers apprenticeship training and related instruction for registered apprentices working in the construction trades. On June 6, graduates alongside family, friends, registered apprenticeship sponsors, Academy staff and other supporters gathered at IDEA Public Charter School in Northeast Washington, D.C. for the ninth annual graduation ceremony. Draped in golden stoles with 2018 over one shoulder and the acronym DCAA on the other, the students patiently sat in the front rows of a skilled training classroom as they waited to receive their certificates of completion.

Moments before officially presenting the graduates, Lesley Harris shared a few words. As the program coordinator for the D.C. Apprenticeship Academy, Harris has worked with multiple classes, but says this one is a standout.

“I’m a little sad today because this is actually the best class,” she says. “Each one of you guys I really care about and I am so proud and excited for you. You worked hard for this and showed you could be great.”

Every Man Has a Story

Polinsky readily admits that the training program is a “big challenge” because each registered apprentice is balancing a full-time job that starts early in the morning, with late afternoon classes starting at 4:30 p.m. He makes an hours-long commute from Manassas, Virginia to the District after a 10-hour workday.

“On school days, I have to leave a couple

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On this day, she's talking with recruiters from M.C. Dean and Shapiro & Duncan that are looking to hire summer interns and new graduates for employment in the construction trades. Johnson, for one, is hopeful.

"At Shapiro & Duncan, right now I could be an intern with them. He said apply and say I was at the [ACAD] job fair," said Johnson after an informal interview with the mechanical contractor. "For M.C. Dean, I have to be a big kid."

She laughs.

"They accept you when you graduate out of high school, so I'm still a baby," continued Johnson, 16.

Just shy of summer break, the Academy of Construction and Design on June 6 held a job fair to introduce students—including current Academy scholars and alumni of the training program—to the opportunities in electrical, carpentry and other specialty trades.

"I just believe students should be exposed to a number of different industries because you never know when a light bulb is going to go off," stressed Shelly Karriem, director of the Academy of Construction and Design. "It just makes sense to bring these employers and partners together so they can talk to our students about their companies because our kids are their workforce."

Making the Connection

Other employers in attendance included Miller & Long Concrete Construction and Ruppert Landscape, with representatives discussing a variety of internships and training programs.

At the M.C. Dean booth, human resource generalist Erin May chatted with just over a handful of students. She shared information about the company's electrical, securities and telecommunications apprenticeship program for those looking to jumpstart their careers right out of high school. Plus, there's an offering of summer internships for students interested in pursuing computer sciences and electrical or mechanical engineering. Meanwhile, a separate technical internship provides four years of training—a mix of working on site and directly with engineers—while students pursue post-secondary education.

"Hopefully, by the fourth year, we can offer them a full-time position if they will accept it," said May.

Nearby, Jesus Yactayo, with Shapiro & Duncan, talked up career development opportunities like apprenticeship training, in which the company sponsors registered apprentices through a rigorous four-year program and pays for all related specialized instruction. At the end of the program, each graduate receives a journeyman's

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D.C. CREDENTIALLED Grad Troy Polinsky (center) accepts his certificate of completion from DCSCTF's Beth Moore (left) and DCAA's Lesley Harris.

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hours early to get [to class] in traffic," says Polinsky, who works for M.C. Dean and leaves home each morning around 4 o'clock. "It's a long day."

But it's been worth it. "I started a new career doing this," he adds.

Polinsky says he graduated with a B.A. in accounting and worked for years at Chicago firms doing financial management and office administration. After moving to the District for family reasons, he decided to try something new. Ultimately, he landed with M.C. Dean, discovered the apprenticeship program and four years later, "Here we are!"

While pointing out there are plenty of learning opportunities ahead, Polinsky notes that the highlight of this journey has been the connections made with a diverse group of fellow apprentices. "The best part has been really getting to know all the guys I went to class with, who have all different sorts of backgrounds," he says.

Meanwhile, Fort Totten resident Anton Dyson says the biggest challenge he faced in the training program was remembering—and then applying—what he learned in class on the job. But he pushed through, spending his workdays bending pipe and running wire, installing light fixtures and other electrical-related work.

Like for his peers, mornings start before dawn. Dyson gets up as early as 5:30 a.m. to be on the job for employer E.C. Lyon Electric Co. by 7 a.m. Although immersed in a skilled trade during his time in the Academy, Dyson shares that his interest in this field grew from watching his uncle, also an electrician. "He kind of pushed me into



IT'S ALL LOVE With family by his side at graduation (including his uncle, right), Anton Dyson completes a four-year journey.



A QUIET MOMENT Graduate Antoine Newsome shares time with his biggest supporters.

it," admits Dyson, whose uncle cheered him on during the ceremony.

"The electrical work fascinated me. It took a lot of thinking and craftsmanship to do," Dyson recalls. Now as he joins the latest graduating class, Dyson says a "big weight is off my shoulders"—and his family is by his side.

"When I was going through this journey, it was stressful," Dyson remembers. "I was going

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ENTREPRENEUR JUSTIN SULLIVAN TALKS 'SOUL' OF SKILLED TRADES

Talk to any newly minted electrical graduate of the D.C. Apprenticeship Academy, and it's clear the day is a big deal. Still, it's the "tiny little details" that will prove to be key to their future successes, according to Justin Sullivan, president and owner of green construction-focused Impact Remodeling and Construction in Washington, D.C.

"Everything you guys do is about little, tiny details," said Sullivan, the graduation ceremony's keynote speaker, whose insight is gleaned from experience.

Sullivan has worked in the trades for more than 20 years, and in that time, he's learned valuable lessons that he freely shared. This is an industry, he said, that takes hard work. But it is

also a "rewarding, natural place to grow your careers and grow yourselves," he added.

"You can put on a suit and manage a lot of people, but you're never going to get the sense of soul and spirit [you get] from working on the job site," he told grads.

Sullivan was only 13 years old when he started his own journey into the skilled trades, drilling nail holes and caulking as a painter's helper for his dad. By the age of 18, he had transitioned from one day a week to five days a week during the summer. Post-college life exposed him to multiple professional opportunities, including working for a law firm. But the childhood experience of working among carpenters, painters and others in the skilled trades opened the door to a different set of opportunities that helped him "forge his own path."

The pull to the trades persisted. And eventually, Sullivan said he started what is now a leading home improvement construction firm in the District.

Looking out at the students in the audience, Sullivan cautioned that those within this city may not have the level of appreciation for skilled trades that is warranted. The assertion drew affirmative nods and rumblings in agreement. "Don't expect people to appreciate what you guys do. As you'll learn as you move along in your careers, you've got to get that appreciation from yourselves, those you work with every day and your family," he advised. "Show your kids some day the projects that you've worked on."

Because they had learned a valuable skill set, Sullivan also urged graduates to appreciate their worth. Plus, he encouraged them to be open to evolving toward opportunities like starting a business, and to have fun with their chosen careers—enjoy not having to sit in an office all day long, he said.

Ultimately, Sullivan praised the electrical graduates for remaining steadfast. "A lot of your decisions to get where you are now say a lot about your character," he said. "It tells me you're a group that follows your own path. It tells me you are risk takers."—AAH □

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through this alone and thinking, 'I don't think anyone understands how difficult it is.' " But on this day, his family turned out to support him. "That they actually came here to support me means a lot," he acknowledges.

Ultimately, Dyson says being part of the D.C. Apprenticeship Academy is a life-changing experience for him as well as his family. "Learning this stuff is something no one can take away from me and I can continue to build on forever," he says. "It's definitely a blessing." □

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license. Shapiro & Duncan also offers financial education assistance, he said. "I think education is important. There are a lot of opportunities out there for those individuals looking for career advancements," he said.

For Yactayo, there are three key traits that he's looking for when interacting with current and former Academy students: attitude, aptitude and ambition. He explained it this way: "Attitude is someone who has the right personality and is eager and willing to learn. Aptitude is someone who is going to go to any job site for Shapiro & Duncan and respect employees, as well as follow supervisors' and managers' direction. And someone who is ambitious is always looking for success."



GETTING SCHOOLED IDEA students, including senior Wayne Powell (far right), hold court with Miller & Long's HR rep Kenneth Glover.

According to Yactayo, some students needed more prepping (for example, better eye contact and more confident body language). Karriem noted that the Academy's new internship program, ACAD Builds, seeks to address some of these challenges.

Still, Yactayo praised those who came ready to make that connection with employers. "I spoke with four or five students and would say two of them are definitely ready to be hired," he told *JOBS Coalition Pathways*. "I really wanted to talk more than 15 or 20 minutes."

Let Me Introduce Myself

One student who appears to be leveling up is Wayne Powell. Although not enrolled in the Academy, he said that he couldn't turn down the chance to have more life options. When speaking with employers, Powell said he introduced himself and shared what he had to offer the job. And what might that be? "I have my certification in welding," said the 18-year-old senior, who handed out copies of his resume.

Powell completed a six-month program at the Southeast Welding Academy while balancing life as a high school student. He attended the welding program after school. And with a 1-year old daughter to provide for, he's looking ahead. That to-do list includes completing more certifications, and he continued without hesitation: "I want to get with Shapiro & Duncan." □

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.



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