



A WALK IN THEIR SHOES

AN INSIDE PEEK INTO THE CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT TRAINING PROGRAM

In our second issue of "A Walk in Their Shoes," a special edition of Progress Magazine, we shine a spotlight on the Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge Project's Construction Management Training Program (CMTF).



Speaker: Gary Olson
Front row (L to R): Darnel Vines, Darrin Joyce, Jameka White
Second row: (L to R) Ra'Adia Cloyd, Rashard Grant, Antonio Stephens

Nearly a decade ago the Construction Management Training Program was launched as part of the District Department of Transportation's 11th Street Bridge Project. In 2019, the New Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge (FDMB) Project continued this program, which offers a unique, hands-on field training and classroom instruction curriculum that provides accelerated instruction and opportunities for primarily disadvantaged District residents to earn certifications and increase chances of employment in the Construction Management field.

"This program is significant because it provides unemployed minorities, women, and disadvantaged residents the opportunity to gain confidence and acquire required skills and certifications to compete for jobs above minimum wage in the highway construction industry," states Pamela Cooley, a facilitator of the program with District-based firm Justice & Sustainability Associates (JSA).

This eight-week intensive training program offers jobseekers the opportunity to acquire five important

and in-demand certifications, enabling them to be more competitive in the highway construction industry job market for positions paying between \$20 and \$24 per hour. These certifications include concrete, soils, aggregate compaction, as well as safety and flagging. To help them earn the certifications, participants receive classroom instruction, hands-on and on-site experience, mentoring, and the opportunity to shadow construction management professionals in the field.



Rashard Grant working with Pamela Cooley and Jameka White working with Gary Olson during Field Day activities testing soil.

"Our program was designed so that people end up using their brains more than their brawn. It is designed to show participants the management side of the job and how to ensure quality," states Gary Olsen, who served as a teacher and mentor for the program. He is also the Assistant Construction Manager with HNTB, the program manager for the New FDMB project.

"This program is life changing. A couple of the participants were homeless while attending CMTF. Each evening, after class, they had to find a homeless shelter. After receiving their certifications, they were hired and now have a home for themselves and their families," states Pamela.

For this program, the New FDMB team specifically focused on helping residents East of the River who lived in proximity to the bridge project to develop these transferable skills that would assist in gaining future employment.

"Prior to the CMTP I was working with a government contracting moving company, but I was looking for a career. I believe the CMTP and other programs like this are important because it gives people a real opportunity to learn and become certified in trades. It also gives people a better chance at life," states Davon Chavis, a CMTP graduate.

Davon, a Ward 7 resident, is now an engineering technician with Kim Engineering, a multi-disciplinary engineering firm based in Beltsville, MD. His job involves going to different construction sites to test various materials like soil and concrete, which he learned in the CMTP.

"One of the valuable skills I've learned is essentially being a teacher; being able to give people knowledge and a better understanding. That will assist me in advancing in my career because if I'm able to give someone the knowledge that I have, while still being able to learn more, it would help me grow as a person, and with my company," states Davon.

As of this publish date, half of the recent cohort received all five certifications and three of the four received jobs in the construction industry. The fourth graduate is in the second round of interviews.

"People need jobs. People need hope and encouragement. Programs are important because people in my community often aren't informed of these types of opportunities to enlighten them and help them to get a career or job," states Jameka White, also a graduate of the New FDMB On-The-Job Training (OJT) Program.

While Jameka already had a job on the New FDMB project, she was encouraged to join the CMTP program because it would give her an opportunity to gain the valuable certifications and make her more marketable in the construction industry.

"After completing the CMTP and getting all five of the certifications that were offered, I see a whole new career and world that I didn't know existed. I've been in quite a few D.C. programs, and this is by far one of the best. With these certifications under my belt, I see instant doors opening for myself," states Jameka.

One of the unique features of the program is that each student was assigned a mentor to assist them in completing the program. Facilitators believe this feature proved to be beneficial as each cohort since the beginning of the program has produced more certifications and participants hired for full-time employment than the previous one.

"One of the biggest highlights for me is being able to watch first-hand people of different age groups, backgrounds, and walks of life come together to learn one thing. Seeing all the students in the field dumping dirt into a cake pan so they can practice testing soils, and helping each other out so they can all advance, was amazing to see," states Ra'Adia Cloyd, who serves as a CMTP mentor and Office Engineer with DDOT.

"The most rewarding part of this program for me is participating in the graduation ceremony and watching graduates from previous cohorts come back and offer their words of wisdom and testimonies to the new graduates. To see the torch being passed from one cohort to the next, paying it forward to the next generation, is powerful," states Gary.



Front row (L to R): Tyrelle Barnett, Chris Pair
Second row: (L to R): Gary Olson, Clifford Lowery, Davon Chavis, Ra'Adia Cloyd, Jameka White, Darnel Vines, Pamela Cooley, Mickeyas Mengistu, Bill Payne