

# The Construction Orientation Intake Center Approaches Thirty Years Providing Jobs

15,000 separate interviews with candidates, almost 4,000 placements in construction positions with good salaries and full benefits, African-Americans and women finding careers that they never imagined for themselves. Twenty-seven years is a long time.

“Who’s keeping track of numbers?” asks Armand Paulet, director of the Construction Orientation Intake Center. “I have all the statistics too, but I don’t ever look at them. I’m too busy meeting with people.” Each workday Paulet is at his desk in the SLATE offices downtown making phone calls and doing interviews with candidates for union construction jobs. A 2015 illness has taken his left leg and put him in a wheel chair but not dampened his enthusiasm. “I still have it. I can’t get to all the meetings I used to because of my leg but I enjoy making a difference in people’s lives. A lady sheetmetal worker called me yesterday—someone I got into the union. She’s starting work on Monday. I’m happy for her. I’m happy when I can help like that.”

The Construction Orientation Intake Center dates from 1992, when then Mayor Vincent Schoemehl signed an executive order mandating certain percentages of blacks, women, and city residents be included in city construction contracts. “People don’t remember life before the Executive Order,” says Paulet, “but city residents were often excluded from the very construction projects that their taxes were paying for.”

Someone was needed to oversee the requirements of the mayoral order, someone who would be acceptable to city government, the construction companies, the unions, and the community--acceptable to all sides, because he had worked with them. That someone was Armand Paulet, and the Construction Orientation Intake Center was formed.

**Dan Knight**, retired apprenticeship coordinator for Local 2 of the Roofer’s Union, received referrals from Armand Paulet for twenty years: “Armand was my best resource, because he knew what we needed,” says Knight. “People from some programs were well-meaning, but they would send you people who had no aptitude for the job, or no transportation! Other people would talk a good game at meetings (about the need for jobs) but never return your phone calls. It was different with Armand. He understood the process and the type of candidates we were looking for.”

**Bryan Watson** was a 1996 client of Armand Paulet at the Construction Intake Center. Twenty-three years later he is a journeyman laborer with S.M. Wilson and an executive board member of Local 42 of the



*Tanisha Hudson shows her journeyman Laborer certificate with **Paric Construction**. She stands between **Patrick Pryor**, Secretary/Treasurer for the Missouri Eastern District Laborers Council (left) and **Kendra Santa** from **Alberici Construction**.*

Laborers Union. “My relationship with Armand has been great. I try to refer only the best candidates to him. The Lord has given me a spirit that recognizes the good ones. Some people say they want to do it, but construction is not for them. It is still hard work, even though it pays well. But it’s not just the money, the union is a brotherhood, the only thing that’s as good as the Lord himself. And my son is now an apprentice carpenter.”

**Deborah Chunn** was a 2016 client of the Construction Orientation Intake Center. She is now a journeyman with Local 2, one of several African-American females in the Roofer’s union. Like Bryan Watson, Deborah is giving back to the community, attempting to start her own roofing company and getting it approved as a union shop. “I want to help others the same way I was helped,” Deborah says. “I want to prove to other women that there is more to life than getting your hair and nails done. Not that I’m against that, but that’s on payday. When it comes to the job, you have to focus and stay the course.”

It all began for Deborah with an interview with Armand Paulet and his continuing help through the years. (Dan Knight was in charge of the training program.) “Armand is awesome,” says Deborah. “He helps everyone who comes to him.”

### Workforce Happenings:

Veterans are a population group that the Construction Intake Center concentrates on under the **Helmets to Hardhats** program. Recently Armand Paulet placed two veterans with **Hofers Heroes for Hire**. The beginning hourly wage is \$18.09 with full benefits. Another veteran is a 2<sup>nd</sup> year apprentice operator with **Alberici Construction** with an hourly wage of \$22.33. He completed a four-week pre-apprentice training program in carpentry and was then



*Armand Paulet and Demetrius Cooper, a 2019 placement of the Orientation Intake Center, recently hired by Mechanical Solutions. Cooper is a graduate of the Local 36 Sheetmetal Worker Training Program and will begin as an apprentice in his new position.*

assigned to the contractor by **Local 513**, a hiring hall trade.

**Tanisha Hudson** was originally sponsored into the Laborers Apprenticeship Training Program by **Ben Hur Construction**. When Tanisha came to the Intake Center she had been laid off by that company, and Armand Paulet placed her with **Paric Construction** where she completed her apprenticeship and became a journeyman laborer. She is still employed at **Paric**.

**Demetrius Cooper** was originally referred to the Intake Center by a journeyman roofer also placed by the Intake Center. After a lengthy process, Cooper was then referred to the **Local 36 Sheet Metal Workers Training Program**, and completed all requirements including testing and interviews. He was ranked number twelve on the hiring list and was recently called by the union to start his apprenticeship training with **Mechanical Solutions Inc.** with a starting pay of \$18.20/hour. Demetrius will work with this same contractor for his four-year apprenticeship, after which he will obtain his journeyman card. **Shenna Houston**, another Intake Center client, was also recently called by **Local 36** and is beginning her apprenticeship with the same sheet metal worker's training program and the same company, **Mechanical Solutions Inc.**

**McCarthy Construction** is the primary contractor on the **NGA Defense Mapping Construction Project** scheduled to start at the end of 2019 or the beginning of 2020. The contract amount is \$700 million and will require multiple subcontractors. The NGA project is a federal project not under the afore-mentioned local employment ordinance. The Intake Center has established a working relationship with McCarthy on this and other projects, however, and anticipates a large number of construction job opportunities from **Defense Mapping**.

## Program Statistics

July 1, 2018—June 30, 2019

	Referrals			Placements		
	2017-18	2018-19	%	2017-18	2018-19	%
Male	371	463	93%	109	101	80%
Female	28	36	7%	12	26	20%
White	24	39	8%	12	19	15%
Non-white	375	460	92%	109	108	85%
<b>Total</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>499</b>		<b>121</b>	<b>127</b>	