

SLATE Update

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ST. LOUIS AGENCY ON TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT (SLATE)



Francis G. Slay, Mayor



ST. LOUIS AGENCY ON TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

SLATE
MERCURI CARLIER CENTER

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americanjobcenter

May 2014 Issue

ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS:

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SLATE Update is a monthly newsletter produced by the St. Louis Agency on Training and Employment (SLATE), part of the City of St. Louis and funded by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). SLATE helps match area job seekers with businesses through a variety of no-cost services.

The purpose of this publication is to share the progress and outcomes of our many programs, and will be of special interest to legislators, Workforce Investment Board members, vendors, partners, educational institutions, other public agencies or anyone with an interest in workforce development.

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CHAMPIONING MINORITY-OWNED SMALL BUSINESS IN ST. LOUIS

Cory Elliott is owner and President of CMT Roofing, LLC. Her company is helping to remove copper roofing and renovate the material underneath as part of ongoing work at Lambert–St. Louis International Airport. As a public works project, Lambert falls under St. Louis City Ordinance 69427, the legislation overseen by SLATE that helps ensure workforce diversity within construction and the building trades.

For nearly two decades, Elliott had a successful career in the healthcare industry. In 2012, she made the switch both to an entrepreneur and to roofing. “While I loved healthcare, I realized that the most rewarding part of my work was working with the facility construction projects”, she said. “Construction was the one place that there was always a finite beginning and end. There was always great team collaboration and everyone was working toward the same goal.”



Cory Elliott, CMT Roofing, LLC.

Cory sees a definite trend with similar opportunities opening up for women and minorities. “If you look even now, the Presidents of S.M Wilson. and Tarlton are both females. The future for minority-owned businesses has an excellent outlook in St. Louis. I think the businesses that will be successful will focus on service and partnering.”

Although a relatively young company, CMT Roofing has been extraordinarily busy. In addition to



Roofing crews with CMT Roofing began the demolition of Lambert's 60-year-old copper roof earlier this spring.



Photo Credit: FLYSTL.com.

the Lambert Airport

Copper Roof Replacement, Elliott is proud of her company's work on behalf of Rams Training Park, the St. Louis Public Schools, the Wentzville School District and Ranken Technical College. More projects are arriving. "The focus is to work with BJC, Monsanto, Washington University, Ameren, and MSD. My dream for this year is to be awarded the roofing work on the new IKEA building."

When asked what advice she would give to other potential small business owners, especially women, Elliott was very specific: "Have a solid business plan. Have your banking arrangements solidified upfront. Understand your niche and what you bring to the table. Recruit an excellent team. Surround yourself with other business owners and people who understand what you are trying to do. Continue to grow and learn." SLATE's partnership with the Small Business Empowerment Center (SBEC) can help customers with many of these areas. "Most important," Elliott added, "have faith and be confident in your ability to succeed."

She is grateful to the staff at SLATE, particularly Building Trades Liaison **Armand Paulet**, for helping her establish a productive relationship with Roofers Local 2

and access the experienced workers needed to complete CMT's many impressive projects to date.

MAJOR DONATIONS MAKE YOUTH SUMMER PROGRAM IN ST. LOUIS A REALITY



This summer, two major donations – one private and one public – will allow more teens and young adults to earn a paycheck in the City of St. Louis.

On May 7, representatives of the *JPMorgan Chase Foundation* joined Mayor Francis Slay's challenge to other area businesses. If they are able to match Chase's **\$100,000** gift to STL Youth Jobs, the funds will go a long way towards helping reach the Mayor's Sustainability Action Agenda goal of providing 500 youth jobs over the summer months in 2014.

"This gift is very significant. The JPMorgan Chase Foundation will provide employment for **50** teens and young adults living in neighborhoods with high poverty,

crime, and low educational attainment," said Mayor Slay. "Our young people want to work. They want the same bright future we want for them, and rewarding that work with a paycheck teaches young people the value of discipline, sacrifice, respect and teamwork."

Now in its second year, STL Youth Jobs is putting **16-23** year olds to work in the City of St. Louis with the help of public and private support. Managed by the Incarnate Word Foundation, STL Youth Jobs engages teens and young adults in meaningful employment to reduce crime, increase academic success, and make it more likely that they will get a second job.

It costs **\$2,000** to fund one youth employee's job.

Mayor Slay has set aside **\$100,000** of the City budget for the program, and allocated another **\$100,000** from the City's Public Safety Trust Fund. That investment will allow **100** at-risk teenagers and young adults to gain employment.

Another **100** paid positions are being funded through the *State Parks Youth Corps (SPYC)* program, which is expanding to St. Louis this year through a partnership with the Department of Social Services. The nationally-recognized program challenges young people to "Think Outside" by working on projects that help preserve and enhance both Missouri's state park system, and various City parks.

Mayor Slay notes, "These jobs come at a perfect time for St. Louis. Voters approved the Prop P sales tax to make much-needed improvements and maintenance

upgrades to our parks and facilities, and many of those projects are now shovel-ready. So, it will be good to have extra hands to help move those projects forward.”

SPYC youth employees, age **17-23**, will work outdoors in City parks and historic sites through September 30, 2014, earning the Missouri minimum wage of **\$7.50** an hour. Applications for SPYC are now being accepted online at <http://www.thinkoutside.mo.gov/>. Every participant is required to pass a background check and drug screening. Applications that satisfy state requirements will be forwarded to SLATE, who will complete the youth recruitment process, conduct orientations and provide job readiness training. Nine temporary staff are currently assisting SLATE to ensure the program’s success. For more information, please call **(314) 622-3233**.

SERVICES FOR ENTREPRENEURS EXPANDING

SLATE has released a schedule for the upcoming *E-BLAP (Entrepreneurs’ Business Legal Assistance Program)* activities designed to assist individuals wanting to start or expand their own small business. The program will primarily serve dislocated or laid off workers from the City of St. Louis and St. Louis County. Most of the

services are provided at **no cost**.

Legal workshops and counseling sessions will address such issues as contracts, employment law, and intellectual property, among others. Additional, more focused small business workshops will include such topics as negotiating leases, joint ventures vs. partnerships, W/MBE contracts, bidding and bonding, and DBA (doing business as).

Also scheduled are legal clinic sessions, which will take place every 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month, starting in June. Business owners having questions about any of the topics from the previous seminars will have an opportunity to meet and consult with a legal expert.

E-BLAP workshops became possible through a partnership between SLATE, Small Business

Empowerment Centers (SBEC), Legal Services of Eastern Missouri (LSEM), and the St. Louis Development Corporation (SLDC).

LSEM is a private, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that provides legal assistance to the low-income community. It handles civil cases in such areas as family, housing, consumer education, immigration, public benefits, income maintenance and others, and also provides no-cost small business legal assistance to qualified entrepreneurs.

FORMER SLATE CUSTOMER SHOWS AN IMPRESSIVE RESUME

When **Ernest ‘Ben’ Nwidag** first visited SLATE 12 years ago, he was seeking employment to support his family in Nigeria. Young and almost homeless, Nwidag wanted to work in the IT field but his inadequate work experience, lack of certification and no college degree limited his prospects. But he had ambition, energy and determination – a decade later he was able to present his former job developer, **Bonnie Forker** (now SLATE’s Business Development Manager) with an impressive resume full of IT projects and management/supervisory experience.

Currently, Ben holds an IT position with the Department of Veterans Affairs, is a homeowner and was able to bring his wife and three children a new life in the U.S. “A retrospect of the last 12 years brings back the reflection of a run-



E-BLAP WORKSHOPS:

- **June 25:** *Bonding for W/MBE.*
- **July 25:** *Employment.*
- **September 10:** *Intellectual Property.*
- **November 19:** *Contracts, including commercial leases.*

To register, call **(314) 657-3547** or visit www.missouribusiness.net.

ner at the finish line, “said Nwidag. “[The essence of] my journey is the desire to finish strong.”

Often mistreated by the more educated townsmen, his parents, who never completed primary education and therefore worked whatever odd jobs were available, taught young Ernest the importance of education. Nwidag’s determination as an adult is one way he honors his roots.

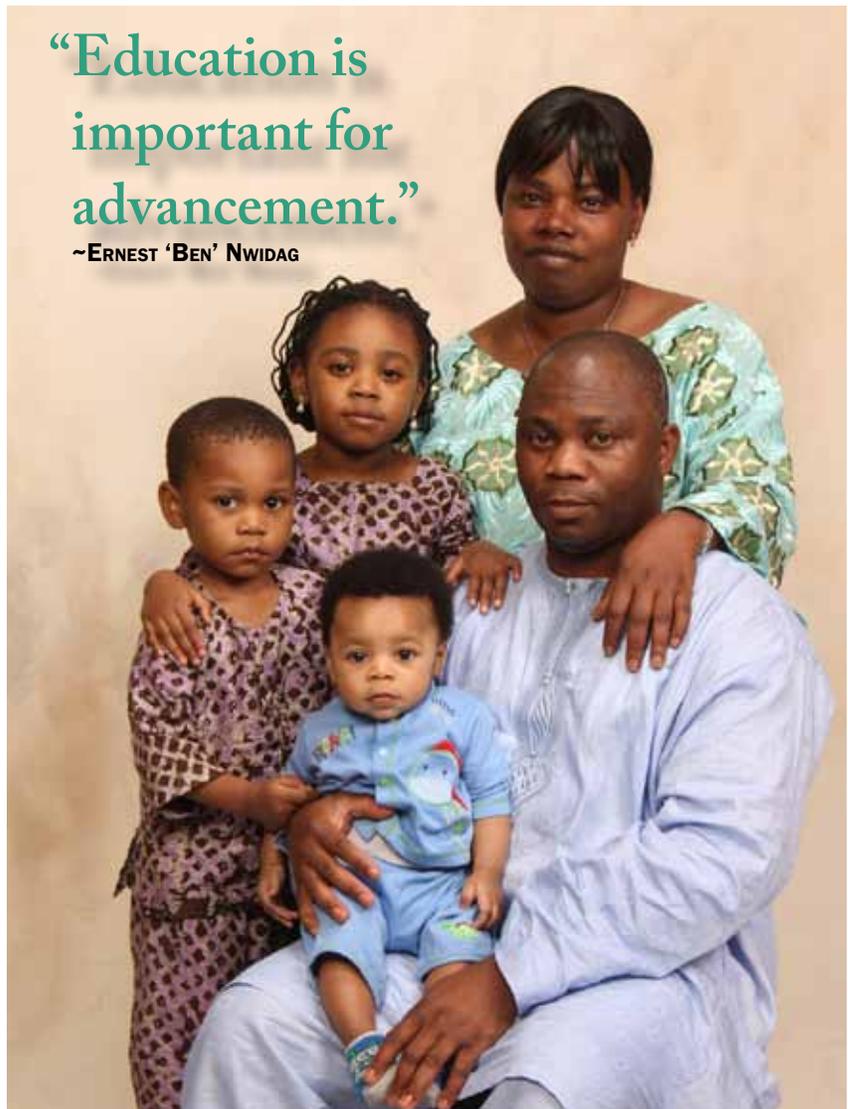
At first, his emigration to this country seemed to be an obstacle to his goals, a “dent” requiring him to start everything again “from square one.” But soon he realized that new information, resources and newly acquired awareness were actually “a catalyst”: “Although I disliked learning typing, taking English as a second language, and writing a resume, I reap the benefits of those exercises today.”

At SLATE, Ben was tested and was approved for an A+ certification training program. After earning *Microsoft Certified Solutions Associate (MCSA)* status, he was able to join the Navy as an IT Specialist. He claims that SLATE and joining the Navy were instrumental in laying the foundation for his professional career. “It is good to be open to people, share your story with others and someone with a good heart [who] will assist, guide or point you in the right direction.”

At the Navy, Nwidag’s leadership abilities were noticed and he quickly moved from the help desk to training, curriculum development and watch standing procedures. He believes the key to his success was “I seek opportunities to learn, take

“Education is important for advancement.”

~ERNEST ‘BEN’ NWIDAG



extra assignments, and through the process, amassed dependable skills that make me a valuable player in any business unit.”

Today, the former 21 year old newcomer with no prospects or connections is a sought-after IT consultant with a respectful line-up of college degrees in Engineering Management, Information Systems Security, Information Assurance, currently finishing his PhD in IT through Capella University. To all immigrants arriving in America and seeking employment, Nwidag

suggests asking plenty of questions and not to hold back. Using no-cost resources like SLATE is a wise move, one that was the key to Ernest Nwidag’s career path.

Through his successes and relocations, Nwidag has remained close to his contacts at SLATE. He visits the Career Center every time he is in the area and remains grateful to Bonnie Forker and Caroline Jennings (now retired) for “giving him his life.” He looks forward to embarking on new journeys, including teaching and travelling.