

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

MISSOURI CAREER CENTER

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americanjobcenter

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ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS:

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SLATE Update is a monthly newsletter produced by the St. Louis Agency on Training and Employment (SLATE), a unit of St. Louis City government helping 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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BUILDING UNION DIVERSITY INAUGURAL GRADUATION

At the northernmost tip of the City of St. Louis near Interstate 270, a training school for Plumbers & Pipefitters Local 562 teaches trainees the hands-on skills needed to

weld, join and cut pipes. This was the location for the first graduating class affiliated with the new Building Union Diversity (BUD) program.

Plumbers & Pipefitters has trained 9 new apprentices to enter the building trades. One woman and 8 men, nearly all African Ameri-

“You received hands-on training here that I don’t think you can find anywhere else.”

~JEFF ABOUSSIE, THE ST. LOUIS BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION TRADES COUNCIL

can and including four veterans, received their certificates of completion on November 14 in the same room where they received much of their instruction from experienced tradesmen. The class program was based on input from local contractors' stated needs as they gear up for new construction projects.

Jeffrey P. Aboussie, executive secretary-treasurer at the Building and Construction Trades Council of St. Louis, was present to individually present each class member with his or her certificate. "You received hands-on training here that I don't think you can find anywhere else," he told them. Each student was rated in such categories as motivation, participation and work ethic, and nearly all of them received a composite score of over 80 percent.

Dr. John Gaal, who oversees and coordinates training programs for organized labor across the St. Louis region, congratulated the students on their dedication: "9 out of 12 who entered this program are graduating today, and I know it was tough sometimes. But thank you for sticking with it."

On behalf of SLATE, *Earl G. Strauther, Jr.*, who oversees our Construction Intake Center, also attended. "We will do everything we can to match you with jobs

Photo below (left to right): **Armand Paulet**, SLATE Construction Intake Center, **Michael K. Holmes**, SLATE Executive Director, **Curtis Bird**, **Ray Gude**, SLATE Employment and Training Advisor.

when you leave here," said *Strauther*. "The new IKEA building falls under the workforce diversity ordinance and they've been asking where they can find qualified minorities, women and City residents. Well, you're right here in front of me...your success is our success."

BUD and SLATE congratulate this first of many graduating classes prepared to enter the building trades and ensure that businesses and contractors meet the goals set forth by St. Louis City Ordinance 69427. Local 562 includes 4,500 members who serve the plumbing and mechanical industry in 67 counties across Eastern Missouri.

TEAMWORK AT SLATE LEADS HELPING HAND TO IRON WORKER

As a journeyman Iron Worker with Local 396 since 1992, *Curtis Byrd* had been able to earn a good living until the full force of the Great Recession hit the construction indus-

try in 2009. After being laid off, lack of work in construction and a series of personal crises which included a felony conviction and incarceration in 2013 contributed to a downward spiral for *Curtis*, who became homeless. The tools he had once owned to work in his trade had been sold off, stolen or lost. *Byrd* was released on parole in 2014, just as work for iron workers was beginning to reappear, but he faced multiple barriers as he reentered the workforce, including a large reinstatement fee owed to his union.

In August of 2014, *Curtis* was a program participant at Employment Connection when he visited SLATE's American Job Center and met with Employment and Training Adviser *Ray Gude* to set about reentering his trade. *Gude* set up a consultation with SLATE's Construction Trades Liaison *Armand Paulet*, who was able to garner the resources necessary for *Curtis* to be reinstated in Local 396 while finding leads on contractor jobs. *Byrd*



was able to obtain a vehicle to meet his transportation needs with the help of friends and family, but still lacked the all-important tools. For iron workers as with other construction trades it is essential to have one's own tools to be able to immediately accept a short notice offer of work. Curtis needed specialized tools and asked SLATE to help.

The request was a difficult one for SLATE. The complete list of tools needed by an ironworker totaled over \$1,000, an amount far beyond what SLATE can typically commit to a single individual. WIA policy also usually entails that an employment offer be confirmed in writing before a supportive services expenditure can be made on behalf of a customer. By serving as a broker between Curtis, union officials, and potential employers SLATE was able to document that Byrd's lack of tools was denying him employment opportunities. Ultimately, a plan was approved to purchase about \$400 worth of priority tools, those that Byrd needed to immediately return to work.

Since the beginning of November, Curtis has been working for Bumpy Steel/United Iron on projects ranging from the Boone Bridge in St. Charles to the new IKEA Building in the St. Louis Cortex District. He faces increased expenses, including upkeep for his car and moving from temporary to long-term housing, but Curtis continues to communicate with Gude and Pallet at SLATE, budget his limited income, and pursue any jobs that can use his iron working skills. "He has a lot of work to do, but he

has come a long way. It is always gratifying to help someone pick themselves up after past mistakes or bad luck," states Ray Gude.

SERVICES FOR LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED JOBSEEKERS

SLATE has devoted additional resources to developing job opportunities for the increased numbers of long-term unemployed (LTU) job seekers. 99ers – those whose employment insurance benefits have expired – can find it increasingly hard to convince employers they are ready to reenter the job market. President Obama, in his last State of the Union address, called attention to the historically high number of Americans who are ready and eager to work, but who have found themselves among the ranks of the LTU and can be rejected out of hand by employers.

To help businesses overcome any discomfort in hiring somebody who is currently unemployed, SLATE, in partnership with Missouri Division of Workforce Development (DWD), is expanding its popular and effective On-The-Job Training (OJT) program. OJT gives companies an opportunity to test their new hires at a fraction of the cost that might otherwise be required. To date, over **75** local companies have taken advantage of the OJT program in the St. Louis region and saved over **\$828,240**. Typically under OJT, placements must be in full-time (not temporary or contractual) positions, and

can't be federally funded. Once the employment agreement is signed, SLATE will reimburse businesses up to **50 percent** of that eligible candidate's starting salary during his/her on-board training for up to six months or 1,040 hours.

Overall, OJT encourages companies to fill current job openings with candidates who are qualified but currently unemployed.

Additionally, SLATE recently received funding by Missouri DWD to offer Work Ready Missouri - a paid internship for LTU job seekers with some background in IT. Those individuals might be in the process of a career change or acquiring new skills with a complete certificate or diploma, but very little experience. Companies might be hesitant to give such a candidate a chance. Paid internships give companies an opportunity to try out a new person at no cost to them for up to six weeks.

To qualify for Work Ready Missouri, open positions must be at least 32 hours per week with the potential for a longer term of employment immediately after probation. Checks are distributed directly to job seekers for the full amount of their wages. The programs can work hand-in-hand with each other. Upon completion of a paid internship, SLATE

EVENTS *Calendar*

- **Dec. 8-12:** *FastTrac Seminar for Entrepreneurs.*
- **Dec. 11:** *EBLAP: Legal Clinic.*

can offer an OJT agreement and continue to help integrate the new employee while providing the employer with significant cost savings.

“It is a win-win for the job seeker, win-win for us, and win-win for the employer. We’ve never done it before,” said Bonnie Forker, Business Development Manager at SLATE.

While a paid internship is not a commitment to hire, it is a commitment to give the right person a chance. Since July 2014, eight IT companies, including many associated with LaunchCode, have agreed to hire job seekers with less experience.

SLATE CONNECTS TO OPPORTUNITIES AT IKEA

Since IKEA first announced its plans to open its home furnishing store in St. Louis and create **300** jobs, SLATE has been receiving

numerous inquiries from local job seekers. Highly regarded as an employer of choice due to competitive wages, generous benefits, great opportunities for growth, and an energetic, dynamic work culture, the chance to work for IKEA is creating interest and excitement among St. Louis residents.

A good number of quality candidates have already registered with SLATE to receive periodic notifications as employment opportunities at IKEA become available.

Scheduled to open in fall 2015, IKEA St. Louis has already started recruitment for its local management team. Hiring managers for their Food, Sales, Customer Relations, Logistics, Marketing, and Communications/Interior Design departments will continue into the new year, with the bulk of the positions becoming available in mid to late spring 2015.

Individuals interested in jobs at IKEA can still register with SLATE to receive notifications. SLATE also encourages candidates to complete their résumé and work on developing the appropriate skills. Practice interviewing, as well as exploring IKEA’s website and gaining familiarity with the company history and product lines, can significantly improve the chances of pursuing a position there.

SLATE has a variety of workshops that can help candidates to develop a professional-looking résumé and practice their interviewing skills.

Updates about this exciting development can be found on the SLATE website, www.stlworks.com. Information on IKEA in the USA can be found at www.IKEA-USA.com.



SLATE ASSISTS BJC HEALTHCARE JOB FAIR

Close to **550** job seekers showed up between 8 a.m. - noon at the BJC HealthCare Job Fair on October 10, 2014, at SLATE. BJC HealthCare was hiring for 30-40 positions, total.