



ANTHONY RANSOM: A SUCCESS STORY

Study Hard, Work Hard, Give Back

For Anthony Ransom, the workdays started early when he was employed as an electrical apprentice for M.C. Dean. Oftentimes by 4 a.m., he was already driving the Beltway.

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. □



THEY'VE GOT SKILLS
The D.C. Apprenticeship Academy's Class of 2014

D.C. APPRENTICESHIP ACADEMY: PASSPORT TO THE FUTURE

Alongside congratulatory words for the D.C. Apprenticeship Academy Class of 2014 is a quote from Malcolm X: "Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for today." It's a message befitting the latest graduates, who are continuing the professional growth spurred by their latest achievements. After completing more than 576 hours of classroom training and 8,000 hours of on-the-job training, they are one step closer to becoming licensed electricians.

By Arnesa A. Howell

Like the graduates before them, this class knows the rigors of the Apprenticeship Academy, a four-year program where registered apprentices find themselves juggling school and workdays starting as early as 6 a.m. For Timothy Outten, however, the job starts at night at A. Wash and Associates, where he is an electrical apprentice.

Outten said he attended the Apprenticeship Academy from 4 to 8 p.m. before heading to work the overnight shift, which ends at 6 o'clock in the morning. With his young son in school, Outten said he slept during the day. And through family support, he was able to make the rigorous schedule work.

"When it was time to watch the lil' man, they all was a part of it," said Outten, who heard about the program through his employer.

Outten is just one of the nine graduates that

make up the Class of 2014. By completing the program, each received paperwork making him eligible to get a D.C. journeyman's electrician license, which opens the door for new opportunities and training.

"Their wages go up, their hourly rates go up, and that varies by company," said Beth Moore, program director for the D.C. Students Construction Trades Foundation, which hosted the June 11 graduation ceremony. "It's a big jump for them and gives them opportunities to enter new training and maybe [gain] new certifications." She added that they could then move forward to become foremen or superintendents within their companies, and could ultimately test for their master electrician licenses and even strike out on their own.

This is a dream embraced by Outten, who

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The job sites varied – a Fort Belvoir medical facility in Virginia, the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Rockville and one of the roughest commutes, to a Johns Hopkins medical center project in Baltimore.

“I would get up at 3:30 in the morning, and drive almost an hour-and-a half, two hours going and two-and-a-half hours coming home because of traffic. That was the most exhausting part,” remembers Ransom. “You’d have to park in the neighborhood and walk to the job site – about 10 to 15 minutes – and if you didn’t get there early, you wouldn’t have a place to park. And it was pitch black out.” Getting home by 8 or 9 at night was the norm, and he still had to cook, eat dinner and study before bed.

Then repeat.

Making his schedule even more demanding? Balancing his new responsibility as a father with that of being a student in the D.C. Apprenticeship Academy, an apprenticeship training program for registered apprentices in the construction trades. Two days a week during his first year, he got a few hours shaved from his 10- to 12-hour workday to attend classes and sharpen his electrical skills.

“I took electrical work very seriously. I loved it so much. I was becoming my craft – eating, sleeping and breathing electrical work,” says Ransom.

Now, the 2013 graduate of the program is sharing that passion with the next generation of registered electrical apprentices. In September 2013, just months after graduation, Ransom returned to the Apprentice-

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ALL SMILES Andrea Carpenter says she is “proud” of her son, Vincent James Jr., for reaching his goal.



Graduation *Continued from page 1*

hopes to one day open his own business in the electrical field. “It feels like a great accomplishment,” he said after graduating, holding his certificate of completion firmly in his hands. “I know I have a big future ahead of me.”

Training for the Future

Tucked away in the Academy of Construction and Design within Cardozo Education Campus, this District-based training ground for registered apprentices has graduated 47 students since 2010. This year’s graduates work full time in construction trades at companies including M.C. Dean, electrical services provider A. Wash and Associates, and Star Electric.

A unique aspect of this apprenticeship training program, according to Moore, is that apprentices include District residents who are graduates of Cardozo. Meanwhile, Vincent James Jr., an electrical level 4 apprentice with M.C. Dean, pointed out that the program’s close proximity to his home contributed to his enrolling and ultimate success in achieving work-life balance. “It’s a wonderful program,” asserted James, adding that he was also impressed by the work done as part of the separate program teaching high school



STEPPING UP Electrical instructor Richard Lawrence (left) presents graduate Troy Dudar with a certificate that sets the foundation for the next step in his career.

students skilled trades.

As each graduate walked forward to accept his papers, family members cheered and snapped photos to commemorate the occasion. Andrea Carpenter was among those in the crowd. “I’m really proud of him achieving what his goal is. He wants more out of life and this is a stepping stone to wanting more,” shared Carpenter, James’ mother, who smiled as her son stood beside her after the ceremony.

While admitting the program is challenging, the graduates also said it has been rewarding – and pivotal to helping them move forward in their selected career pathways. Said Outten of the biggest lesson learned along the way: “Stick with it and get through it because there is a finish line.” □





FAMILY TIES Graduate Timothy Outten celebrates completion of the apprenticeship program with his family and support network.



POWERHOUSE ROSTER Registered apprentices await their names to be called during the graduation ceremony.

SIMPLY THE BEST D.C. Students Construction Trades Foundation's Beth Moore says each apprentice is now ready for his journeyman's electrician license.

JOBS Coalition Pathways

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ship Academy as an electrical instructor, the first graduate to do so. "I love electrical work ... just to be able to teach it, I get to give back," he says.

Running his classroom as an open forum, Ransom emphasizes hands-on learning and encourages students to ask questions and share ideas. He goes beyond the traditional "read the book and study" approach, taking instruction beyond the classroom walls. "I would have classes on the weekends where I would bring the students to the actual job sites so they could see the stuff we were talking about," says Ransom, who teaches Electrical Level 1. "We [also] had some in-class, hands-on experiences." Among those experiences – wiring panel simulations, role-playing exercises and trouble-shooting.

"I want them to fall in love with what they're doing," shares Ransom.

Had it not been for discovering the skilled trades, it might have been a different life for the 25 year old.

Ransom readily admits he came from impoverished circumstances, shuffling between households as a young man growing up in Maryland and Southeast Washington, D.C. "We jumped around from house to house a lot. I lived with my grandmother, my aunt. I lived with my mother for some time," he remembers. He never had a bed or bedroom to himself, a luxury he wouldn't experience until years later after landing one of his first jobs after high school.

Ransom's academic life wasn't much easier. Kicked out of the ninth grade, he was placed in an alternative high school. After making the honor roll, Ransom returned to public school for his senior year, graduating from Oxon Hill High School in Prince George's County, Md. in 2006.

Following a two-year stint at the University of Maryland-College Park and Northern Virginia Community College, Ransom worked as an afterschool program coordinator at a recreation center, where he organized a job fair. It was there that he met a recruiter for M.C. Dean, starting him on his pathway to becoming an electrician.

"She asked me did I want to be a recruiter for an electrical company. And I told her that since I was a kid I wanted to be an electrician," he says. After multiple phone calls and an interview months later, Ransom landed a job. In 2008, he started as an electrical apprentice at M.C. Dean. He also had his first apartment – and newfound responsibility.

"I never had a room to myself, or a bed to myself. So, coming from the ghetto, I just was in a different atmosphere – I was taken from the environment that I was used to,"

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says Ransom. “I knew if I couldn’t maintain that apartment, I would probably be back on the streets again.”

So he spent his days working. And when his employer at the time registered him at the D.C. Apprenticeship Academy, he folded studying into his daily routine. He acknowledges the work was hard, with a “lot of math he hadn’t seen since middle school.” But he didn’t give up, instead focusing on his goal: getting his D.C. journeyman’s electrician license. “I had a set schedule that was grooming me and changing me as a person. I began to read my electrical books, and just study and work,” he says, recalling his progress.

There were changes over the course of the four-year program. Class size for his trade shrank from more than 20 to eight. And Ransom transitioned from M.C. Dean to Hawkins Electric. Despite these changes, Ransom remained steadfast with support from staff of the Apprenticeship Academy and the D.C. Students Construction Trades Foundation, which sponsors the program.

“What made Anthony stand out was his consistent desire to complete each stage of his training and move to the next level,” says Beth Moore, program director for the D.C. Students Construction Trades Foundation. “He submitted his paperwork for licensure as a journeyman

electrician the day after we provided all the documents he needed – I think he was standing on their office doorstep, first in line!”

Moore says Ransom sent her a copy of his license as soon as he received it, and asked if he could be considered as an instructor. “His willingness to learn and give back continues to impress me,” she adds.

By the time Ransom graduated, he had already established his own business, LTE Electric, based in Fort Washington, Md. In December 2013, he left Hawkins Electric to grow his company. With a staff of five (two electrical helpers and three electricians), he is looking ahead. Ransom says he wants to land a government contract, and is prepping for his master’s electrician license test in November.

He is also anxious to teach again during the Apprenticeship Academy’s fall session and continue to share his experiences with the students – some of whom come from similar backgrounds. Calling himself “a student of the game,” Ransom explains: “You see some people who’ve got their back against the wall and really need this ... the same way that I needed it.”

For Ransom, the Apprenticeship Academy has been a life-changer. When asked where he would be without it today, Ransom answers swiftly, the cadence of his voice unwavering: “Dead, locked up or in jail. It saved my life. No doubt.” □

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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JOBS COALITION

