



New D.C. Apprenticeship Academy Manager Kavara McDonald

## HOME AGAIN

When Kavara McDonald graduated from the Academy of Construction and Design (ACAD) at Cardozo in 2007, she never imagined that she'd return to her high school.

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. □



**HISTORY RESTORED** The renovation of historic Cardozo Senior High School.

## RENOVATION EXPOSES CARDOZO'S RICH ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

It's a makeover more than 16 months in the making.

Walking through the dusty halls of Cardozo Senior High School in March 2013 is a journey to uncover the rich history of the school formerly known as Central Senior High School, a name only faintly visible underneath the words "This Is Cardozo" inscribed on the school's exterior. The historic renovation, started in November 2011, has yielded some unexpected finds: richly-hued tilework depicting nautical scenes discovered behind the bulky frames of water fountains, a hidden skylight tier exposed during demolition and marble pillars with copper tops unrecognizable from years of neglect.

By Arnesa A. Howell

All of these surprising historical elements are being carefully restored when possible during the modernization effort of the behemoth school, listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

"We didn't realize until it was uncovered that there were actually two levels of skylight. We knew about some of the tile, but as we were doing some of the demo we found additional tilework," says Mike Sigal, president of GCS Inc., the firm awarded the design-build contract for Cardozo's renovation. He shares that the deco-

orative tile – reminiscent of the arts and crafts style of the 1920s – also depicted "beautiful" forest and lake scenes that they're "hoping to try and restore." Also on the restoration project list: original hardwood flooring and stonework. Salvaged bricks are being used both internally and on the school's façade, and a once-covered fireplace in the library has been restored.

"It captures the history and keeps the history alive of what the school originally was," says Sigal of the significance in restoring these elements. He adds that specialists in historical

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## Kavara Interview *Continued from page 1*

**B**ut this past April, she did just that when she joined the D.C. Apprenticeship Academy as its new manager.

While ACAD students pursue academic requirements for high school graduation and receive pre-apprenticeship training in the skilled construction trades, the Apprenticeship Academy offers more advanced training for adults already working in the trades.

“It was an opportunity that presented itself and I took advantage of that opportunity,” says McDonald, who now oversees the apprenticeship training program as well as assists with ACAD. Both programs are sponsored by the D.C. Students Construction Trades Foundation.

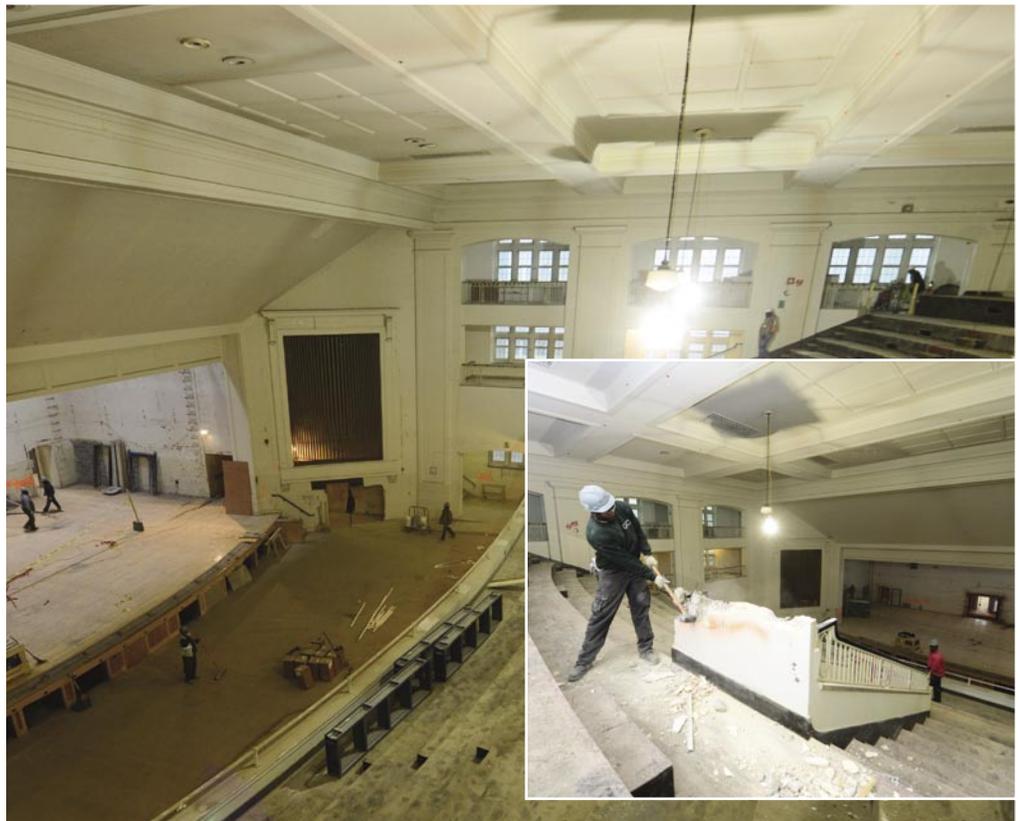
McDonald is already keeping busy. Besides her regular job responsibilities of maintaining a database of apprentice test scores and ensuring attendance is “up to par,” she is prepping for the June graduation ceremony for the latest Apprenticeship Academy class and working on recruitment for ACAD, a program close to her heart. With Cardozo expanding this upcoming school year to include middle school students, McDonald says she’s working on recruitment to introduce these younger students to all ACAD has to offer and sharing how participating in the program could help them in their future careers. She emphasizes that not everyone goes to college after high school, so ACAD offers a viable option.

As for the Apprenticeship Academy – offering classes Monday through Thursday in areas including carpentry, electrical, reinforced ironwork and form building concrete – McDonald is happy to be on board and growing professionally.

Before joining the Academy, she worked as an office specialist for a construction company, which gave her a foundation for some of the day-to-day administrative tasks she carries out. She studied carpentry when enrolled in ACAD. Now back at Cardozo, McDonald is working alongside women including ACAD Director Shelly Karriem, her former teacher, and Beth Moore, program director for the D.C. Students Construction Trades Foundation, both of whom have provided steadfast support.

“It’s not just about the program. It’s about the people behind the program. There are a lot of good people involved in this program,” says McDonald, speaking of the Apprenticeship Academy. “When Beth [Moore] and Ms. Karriem were interviewing me, I told them it would be an honor to be part of a group of women who have done so much for the school and the District.” This program, she continues, gives registered apprentices the opportunity to get a higher education so they can move on in their careers.

McDonald is quick to point out she feels  
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**ULTIMATE FACE LIFT** The auditorium’s stage is under restoration and new seating is being added. The vision is to open up the space and implement a cohesive look.

## Cardozo Renovation *Continued from page 1*

restorations were brought in, a move that likely impacted costs, although he says the project remains “on budget.” It’s been reported that the modernization is costing about \$100 million.

“It’s still around that range – \$100 million – with the give and take of changes,” says Sigal, noting the persistent flux in the scope of work over the months. “There was a lot of demo and a lot of changes that took place with what was going to happen with the school and the formatting of the classrooms,” he says. “The swimming pool, they were going to take it away and now they’re bringing it back.”

With Shaw Middle School’s closure, its students will be folded into the student body at Cardozo, a move that has impacted the modernization process as well. The classroom configurations and placement have been adjusted.

“We have to prepare for the additional grades, and it’s really formatting where those classes are going to go because the design was based on just the high schoolers,” he explains.

At the time *JOBS Coalition Pathways* toured the school, abatement work still had to be done to address asbestos and other issues. However, the renovation will still be completed by mid-July/early August, according to Sigal. “School has



to open,” he says with a chuckle while walking through the school’s corridors.

## UPGRADE IT

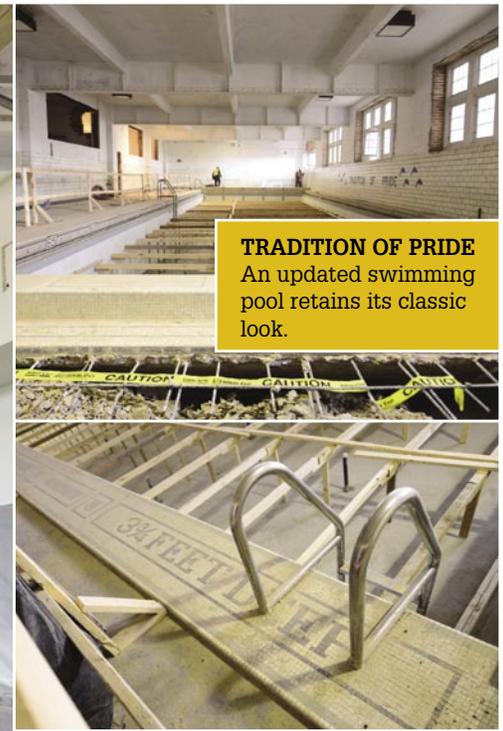
Major updates made during the renovation include the addition of a regulation-sized gym, an updated swimming pool and auditorium, and the enclosure of the atriums to make better use of the space. The entire building was also retrofitted with central air, and windows were replaced. Meanwhile, the Academy of Construction and Design (ACAD) at Cardozo is receiving a boost in workspace. “They’re taking one of the old gyms and they are going to have that as part of their space so [students] can do prefab work in that open space [and] put together parts of a house and assemble some rough carpentry,” he explains of the revamped area.

Sigal admits the project hasn’t been an easy one, in part because they didn’t have all the origi-

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**CLASS-Y MOVE** One of the revamped classrooms.



**TRADITION OF PRIDE**  
An updated swimming pool retains its classic look.



**NAUTICAL FINDS**  
Decorative tile discovered during renovation.

**Cardozo Renovation** *Continued from page 2*  
nal architectural drawings and the structure had so much “wear and tear” over the years.  
“These facilities were just so huge [District of Columbia Public Schools] wasn’t really able to manage and keep them up,” says Sigal.  
Despite the challenges, this project has still been a rewarding experience for Sigal, who serves on the board of the D.C. Students Construction Trades Foundation, which works closely with Cardozo’s Academy of Construction and Design.

Sigal and others have held classes with ACAD students, who have gained hands-on experience at the site by working with the [subcontractors] installing electrical updates and doing carpentry in their own school. “Some of our superintendents and project managers have taught a couple classes at ACAD, talking to them about blueprint reading,” he shares. “I was determined to make it happen [even though] there was a lot of bureaucracy.”  
He continues, “Something I’m proud of and the kids will be proud of is to be part of this and

have pride in their school.”  
The project has also been good in another way: bringing job opportunities to city residents. “When we started the project, we brought on 60 D.C. residents. We trained them to work under GCS as a demo crew,” shares Sigal, noting that figure was whittled down from 800 applicants.

## JOBS Coalition Pathways

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**New School, New Day**  
On this day, scaffolding still frames the exterior. But by summer, the renovated school is set for completion with add-ons that observers hope will improve the student learning experience in career and technical education (CTE) and academics as a whole. “You give kids a great facility and a place to work, and I think it makes it much easier for them to learn,” says Sigal, confidently.  
So when the doors of Cardozo Senior High School reopen for the 2013-2014 academic school year, students will be greeted with revamped classrooms, innovative learning tools and new, more functional social spaces like the atrium and cafeteria. And, just as important, they will have the opportunity to appreciate the rich history of the building with their own eyes. □



**LIGHT AND AIRY** Mike Sigal of GCS Inc. points out that the outdoor atriums have been enclosed in glass so students will have a more functional area, including lounge space.



## JOBS COALITION MISSION STATEMENT

**W**e will work together to develop a long-term strategy that creates an environment where aspiring District residents will have unprecedented opportunity to succeed. We strive to create a fair and open system, supported by government, industry, employers and the education and faith-based communities, which seeks to properly train today's apprentices while making an unparalleled commitment to educating students and others not yet in the workforce.

### **Kavara Interview** *Continued from page 2*

comfortable in her new surroundings. "I've always been around construction because my dad did home improvement," she shares, adding ACAD helped her gain knowledge about the technical side.

Together, these experiences have helped her jump in and quickly acclimate to her role. And she already has a vision for the future: "That we can have multiple locations. I would love for us to get more instructors on board in all the different trades, and be able to spread out across the D.C., Maryland and Virginia areas within three to five years." □

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