

HIGHER LEARNING
Strong school leaders help prepare young men of color for future academic success.

SNAPSHOT ... ON EDUCATION

Breaking Through Educational Barriers

By Arnesa A. Howell

Continued on page 2

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. □



UNITED WE STAND (l to r) Michael Sigal with GCS Inc., Shapiro & Duncan's Mark Drury, JOBS Coalition President Rev. Stephen Tucker, Ruby Washington with DOES, Kermit Kaleba with the DC Workforce Investment Council and Hensel Phelps' James W. Harper III.

WORKFORCE INTERMEDIARIES: Building Bridges for Change

On an October morning at Israel Baptist Church in Northeast Washington, D.C., a group of faith community, construction industry and District government leaders convened to discuss workforce development challenges and opportunities in the District. Their goal: To improve the job readiness of the hard-to-employ and help returning ex-offenders find – and keep – jobs.

By Arnesa A. Howell

“We’ve been across the city and held events trying to bring businesses alongside the faith community to address some of the issues of unemployment,” said Rev. Stephen Tucker, president of the JOBS Coalition, at the Oct. 10 JOBS Coalition Workforce Intermediary Forum. “These forums are constructive efforts to address workforce intermediary issues.”

This forum – a follow-up to last year’s inaugural Clergy/Business Breakfast Summit – focused on the workforce intermediary, where businesses and city agencies work closely with other key stakeholders, such as clergy, in communities across the District to hire, train and retain in-need city residents. But this task is not without its share of challenges, to which the panelists sharing their experiences could attest.

“We believe the workforce intermediary is a nice bridge if it can work, but it has a lot of challenges and opportunities,” said moderator

Carol Randolph, vice president of strategic communications for Miller & Long Concrete Construction.

A Spectrum of Challenges

One of the biggest challenges for Rockville, Md.-based Shapiro & Duncan is its need for skilled workers, as they are looking to put everyone they hire into an apprenticeship program.

“One of the challenges is [that] to get in an apprenticeship program, you must have a high school diploma or a GED,” said Mark Drury, vice president of business development at Shapiro & Duncan. Then there’s the hurdle of transportation to the wide-ranging projects across the Washington, D.C. area, where work usually starts at 6 a.m. “Public transportation doesn’t always suffice,” he said.

Meanwhile, James W. Harper III, community development advisor for Hensel Phelps

Continued on page 2

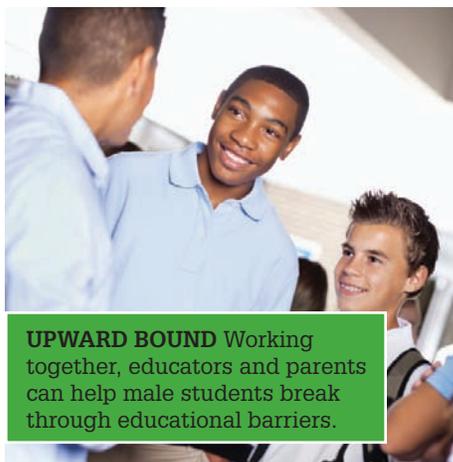
Snapshot *Continued from page 1*

Recognizing the importance of reaching African-American males at an early age, Rep. Edolphus Towns (D-N.Y.) hosted a forum looking at the innovative ways some educators are reaching out to young men. From parental involvement to community collaborations, educational experts shared strategies that are working to close the achievement gap and reduce the chances that young boys will grow into men entangled in the criminal justice system.

David C. Banks, president and CEO of The Eagle Academy Foundation in New York, said that seven neighborhoods produce 70 percent of the inmates in the entire state of New York. “It’s a prison pipeline by design,” he told the packed audience that turned out for the September forum, “From Boys to Men: Breaking Through Educational Barriers.”

Banks has worked hard to counter these statistics by engaging parents in the education of their sons from the very start. “We work very hard to create a culture where parents are wanting to come to the school,” he said, adding that if parents don’t show, they will hear from other parents. “Parent involvement is absolutely tantamount.”

Jabali Sawicki, founding principal of the boys-only Excellence Boys Charter School, spoke of his and his colleagues’ dedication to building successful young men who will graduate from college preparatory high schools and colleges. Also serving on the panel, convened during the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation’s 42nd Annual Legislative Conference, were Aimée Eubanks Davis, executive vice president of people, community and diversity for Teach for America, and Ron Walker, executive director of The Coalition of Schools Educating Boys of Color. With a goal of strengthening school leaders so they can help male students of color reach academic success, Walker understands the importance of having strong, skilled educators. Said Walker, “Never say, ‘I’m just a teacher.’” □



UPWARD BOUND Working together, educators and parents can help male students break through educational barriers.



TRAIN OF THOUGHT Moderator and Miller & Long VP of Strategic Communications Carol Randolph says, “All training programs are not equal.”

3-D LEARNING Shapiro & Duncan’s Mark Drury stresses that every person learns differently, and not every kid is college-bound.

Workforce Intermediary *Continued from page 1*
Construction Co., has experienced similar hiring challenges.

While most hires work out really well, Harper said there have been problems finding both skilled and unskilled workers. Some manage to “skirt through” the interview process before underperforming on the job: not showing up or calling, and not being as productive or efficient as other team members. “That person ends up not lasting, and they get fired,” he said, adding that unpredictability in project schedules is another issue.

Opportunities for Collaboration

Still, construction can be a “very forgiving” industry when it comes to hiring ex-offenders, said Harper. Hensel Phelps and its subcontractors are less concerned about criminal records and more concerned about a person’s dedication to the job.

“We have had individuals work on the job site that had ankle bracelets on,” he said. “They were still on probation.”

Hensel Phelps (currently on the city’s Washington Marriott Marquis Hotel project) is already working with its subcontractors and the Department of Employment Services (DOES). It has a One-Stop Center manned by DOES on-site. And

the company has tapped into workforce development programs and other entities across the city to reach returning ex-offenders. “We’ve coordinated with Charles Thornton at D.C.’s Office on Returning Citizen Affairs,” said Harper, adding that the construction company’s database includes about 70 percent returning ex-offenders.

When faced with a shortage of job opportunities, Sarah Norman of GCS Inc. said, “We try to pass these people on to our subcontractor base – and say, ‘Hey, we have these guys and they’ve been to safety training.’”

Future Leaders

Building future leaders in technical education also means reaching out to young people at every stage in their lives to ensure they have the skills needed to succeed. For Shapiro & Duncan, that’s meant involvement in apprenticeship and education programs targeting the pre-K level. “Working on the next generation is one of the keys to moving forward,” said Drury.

Education comes in different forms, and Drury stressed the importance of understanding that not every child is college-bound. “You need to look at moving our young people into different

Continued on page 3



EYE CONTACT (Clockwise) Shapiro & Duncan's Mark Drury looks on as GCS Inc.'s Sarah Norman and Michael Sigal share a photo of new hires who worked on demolition during the Cardozo modernization project.

Workforce Intermediary *Continued from page 2* avenues, different careers and different opportunities. There's nothing shameful about being in construction and being involved in a vocation and gaining a trade," he said.

It's a sentiment shared by Norman: "Not everybody's on the college track."

As a founding member of the Academy of Construction and Design at Cardozo, GCS has worked to have students "take ownership" of the Cardozo Senior High School modernization effort. "We're currently working with the director and the board to have the students this semester

come on to the job site and actually work with our licensed electricians, carpenters and mechanical trades [so] the students have real life experience," said Norman, who stood alongside GCS Inc. President Michael Sigal.

At the Table

While representatives of the DC Workforce Investment Council and DOES didn't provide specific details about the challenges, they expressed a willingness to come to the table and discuss the issues.

"I'm willing to discuss and review anything
Continued on page 4



FIRSTHAND KNOWLEDGE James W. Harper III with Hensel Phelps says the construction industry is "very forgiving."

JOBS Coalition Pathways

- Managing Editor:** Arnesa A. Howell
- Executive Editor:** Carol Randolph
- Copy Editor:** Pam Ellison
- Contributors:** Arnesa A. Howell
- Graphic Design:** Jenn French Designs, LLC
- Photographer:** Imagine Photography
- Board of Directors:** Robert Braunohler, Bill Dean, Lynn C. French, Balchander Jayaraman, John McMahon, Debra Schoonmaker, Rev. Stephen Tucker, I. Margaret White, Hal Williams
- JOBS Coalition Legal Adviser:** Roderic Woodson

The *JOBS Coalition Pathways* is the exclusive property of the JOBS Coalition, 633 Park Road, NW, Washington, D.C. 20010; 202-726-7400. *JOBS Coalition Pathways* is dedicated to disseminating information that will help strengthen the city's apprenticeship training and job placement programs, broadening the scope to reach the young, the underserved, the unemployed and the returning ex-offender. *JOBS Coalition Pathways* is published by the Jobs Coalition.



WORK IN PROGRESS DOES' Ruby Washington vows to take recommendations back to the agency's director.

Workforce Intermediary *Continued from page 3*
that the agency has implemented or take new ideas, suggestions and recommendations back to the director,” said Ruby Washington, deputy director for employment programs and training at DOES.

Washington offered an overview of some of DOES’ programs, including the On-the-Job Training program (OJT), an initiative launched last year in which businesses are paid by reimbursement from DOES for hiring, training and retaining previously unemployed individuals. “We plan to revise that a little bit for this year, current year 2013,” she shared.

“The agency is changing, and I don’t know how fast we can get to where we need to be or want to be, but the director has a vision and we’re trying to implement that vision,” Washing-

ton concluded.

Kermit Kaleba, program manager for the DC Workforce Investment Council, a District entity responsible for planning and offering guidance to the mayor’s office and D.C. Council on general workforce development issues, among other duties, told attendees that he is “very interested” in learning about “how we can work together to make sure people get good job training and the education they need to succeed in the workforce.”

The forum offered a snapshot of what businesses and city agencies are doing – and hope to do – to bridge the gaps in the employment pipeline. Coming to the table to discuss the issues is just the beginning, leaving much to do to build a successful workforce intermediary, one where individuals link training programs and the business industry. □

JOBS COALITION MISSION STATEMENT

We 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.

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.

Washington, DC 20010
633 Park Road, NW
JOBS COALITION

