



**MAKING AN 'IMPACT'**  
Luncheon Chairman Justin Sullivan urges students to always channel their 'inner electrician.'

## LUNCHEON BITES

### Chairman Talks 'Glamorous' Role of Painter's Helper

For 2017, Meet the Future Luncheon Chairman Justin Sullivan served up a valuable lesson from his youth, telling students of the Academy of Construction and Design at IDEA that great accomplishment can emerge from a modest beginning. He cited himself as an example, having risen from tradesman to entrepreneur.

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. □



**POMP & CIRCUMSTANCE**  
The D.C. Apprenticeship Academy Class of 2017

## D.C. APPRENTICESHIP ACADEMY Grads Push Through Long Days, Personal Challenges to Become Class of 2017

When Treymane Chatman graduated in 2014 from a specialty skilled trades program at Cardozo Senior High School, he had a plan. With the help of a \$3,000 scholarship, he would take the skills gained in high school out into the real world. Chatman got a job at GCS Inc., spending his days carrying out carpentry duties like rough framing, finishing work, and installing cabinets and countertops. But he wanted something more – and signed up for the D.C. Apprenticeship Academy.

By Arnesa A. Howell

After fast-tracking through the program in three years, Chatman achieved his goal. "I am a certified carpenter at the age of 21," he said proudly after the June 7 graduation ceremony, held at IDEA Public Charter School in Northeast Washington, D.C.

As a graduate of the D.C. Apprenticeship Academy's Class of 2017, Chatman became one of only two in his chosen trade to finish the program. He completed 576 hours of specialized training while holding down a full-time job, working his way up from a registered apprentice carpenter.

The D.C. Apprenticeship Academy offers apprenticeship training or related instruction for registered apprentices working in the construction trades, and is normally a four-year program. But Chatman's employer, general

contractor GCS Inc., simultaneously runs an in-house training program, says Beth Moore, director of Foundation Programs for the D.C. Students Construction Trades Foundation, "so its instructor Jack Copeland was able to dual track Treymane to complete the curriculum for years three and four concurrently."

Chatman is one of nine graduates across carpentry and electrical trades to make up the latest class. By completing the apprenticeship training program, each electrical student receives the credential to be eligible for a journeyman's license in the District. And each carpentry student is recognized as certified in his trade.

For Chatman, the journey wasn't without a few bumps in the road. "The biggest challenge was staying inspired," he admitted.

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## Luncheon Bites *Continued from page 1*

**T**he owner of Impact Construction and Consulting praised the graduates after a year of hard work and sacrifice in school, and urged them to make the most of the opportunities in the room – meeting the leaders and decision-makers in the local construction industry who can help them find jobs and internships. “Today’s lunch is quite special because it affords the power and opportunity of introduction,” he told the crowd.

While Washington, D.C. is a city of large buildings dotting the skyline, Sullivan said his company is smaller. He explained that Impact focuses on remodeling projects in the District that help to grow families and local communities. Starting small is where he began, and “that’s going to be your start – it has to be.”

“Many of us started right where you are right now,” said Sullivan, who at 13 started in the “glamorous” role of a painter’s helper for his father, 10-hours a day, a couple of days a week during a summer in Boston. “Every time you are ... taking your nail gun and blasting 50 holes into a five-foot piece of casing, there’s a poor guy who has to fill those nail holes, and that was me – and probably many of these guys as well.”

The story drew laughter from the crowd. “That was my start,” he continued, “and for many of the leaders here today, that was their start as well.”

“The schooling that you’re going through, the critical internships and work experiences that are afforded to you by this Academy will help you to learn and grow in important ways that many of your peers will never have the opportunity to [do],” he told students.

Among the tangible benefits of this work for professionals – and students in internships – is creating something that can be touched and seen. Sullivan spoke candidly to students, encouraging them to think strategically about their next career steps after wrapping up that internship where they will be filling holes and putting together wires. “Whether it’s going from a helper to a foreman to a manager to an entrepreneur – or, through your learning experience you decide maybe construction is not the right fit for you ... you still take that same work ethic with you to your college or university,” he said.

Even in college, he continued, channeling your “inner electrician” can help you get a 7 a.m. start while peers are getting up midday. “That’s your future,” Sullivan asserted, “and that’s what our companies need from you, that’s what our city needs and that’s what our country needs.” □

*Justin Sullivan served as the chairman of the 2017 Meet the Future luncheon, held May 12.*



**MISSION-DRIVEN** Treymane Chatman (center) accepts his certificate of completion from D.C. Apprenticeship Academy Program Coordinator Lesley Harris (left) and DCSCTF Director of Foundation Programs Beth Moore.

## DCAA Graduation *Continued from page 1*

Apprenticeship Academy classes were held in the evenings, so apprentices had to go to class after pulling a full day’s work, which for some started before daybreak.

But looking towards the future kept Chatman motivated: “Then you start thinking about the end achievement and being certified and having your trade under your belt, and you say, ‘Forget it, I’m gonna just do it.’”

Together, he and fellow graduate Patrick Woods, who also works at GCS Inc., helped keep each other on task. “We were battling,” said Chatman of their “nice little friendly competition” to finish first in tests and the program. “It kinda has us going all out.”

He continued, “If you can get a guy like me fresh out of high school to learn a trade and get right on it, why not, right?”

## In This Together

Before the introduction of the graduates, Valerie Ladson, an Apprenticeship Academy instructor and master electrician, provided the keynote address. In her remarks, she heralded the benefits of hard work.

“By working hard, being on time, and doing your skill set properly, you can make a lot of money and then you can start your own company if you desire to do that,” she told *JOBS Coalition Pathways* after the ceremony. “The type of skills



**ON POINT** Keynote speaker Valerie Ladson urges graduates to work hard and “keep going.”

[these graduates] have are in high demand.”

With program enrollees facing challenges like child-care issues and transportation problems from Metro line shutdowns, Ladson always remained steadfast in communicating with students. “I’ll work with you,” she said, with the understanding that class attendance is a priority. “Just show up, because you need to learn as much as you can.”

It’s advice that stuck.

For Abouy Bilkuei, the electrical credential earned at the Apprenticeship Academy brought him one step closer to helping his home country of South Sudan. After graduating in 2007 from the Academy of Construction and Design

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**STAYING MOTIVATED**  
Reginald Prysock says the new skills will help him provide for his family.



**ABOUT THE JOURNEY** Family and friends celebrate the career milestones of the carpentry and electrical apprentices.



**GOOD TIMES (l-r)** DCAA Electrical grad About Bilkuei shares a smile with Shelly Karriem and Treymane Chatman. Both are alumni of a high school technical studies training program led by Karriem.

**DCAA Graduation** *Continued from page 2* (ACAD) at Cardozo Senior High School, he started working for M.C. Dean, which sponsored his electrical apprenticeship.  
From learning basic construction site safety

to more advanced skills, like terminating an electrical panel, Bilkuei aspires to use that knowledge to help others.

He plans to one day open his own company and bring other young people like himself to this country to learn what he's learned in the skilled trades. Bilkuei hopes the relationships he has built and maintained through the years will help him open doors and reach that goal.

With some areas of South Sudan "stuck" without power, he wants to give back: "For the love of my country."

As for next life steps, Bilkuei aims to get his journeyman's license. He also would like to enroll in college – either the University of the District

of Columbia or the University of Maryland – and earn a degree in electrical engineering.

**Roll Call**

From the front of the room, Lesley Harris called off the names of the graduates one-by-one. As the program coordinator of the D.C. Apprenticeship Academy, she knows their stories. "I am proud of you guys," she said from the lectern.

After each name, the audience of family and friends erupted in celebratory applause – punctuated with the occasional whistle.

Moore then stepped up to the mic to give special instructions to the electrical graduates in the room. She advised them not to break the signed seals on the back of their special packets, which are to be taken to the licensure office, the D.C. Board of Industrial Trades. "D.C. passed a law a few years ago that means that students who successfully complete this program in electrical can go get their journeyman's license without taking the exam," said Moore.

**Family First**

Family. That was an overarching factor behind Reginald Prysock's enrollment in the program after learning about it from a friend. The newly-minted electrical graduate said the education

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**DCAA Graduation** *Continued from page 3*  
and skills would enable him to provide for his family. Plus, he noted, “You can’t do anything without electricity.”

Now with a certificate of completion in hand, Prysock is setting his sights on taking the master’s electrician test. But he still remembers the hurdles. The 15-hour days that started when he woke up at 3:45 in the morning. A strenuous workday that began at 5 a.m., and ended so that he could fight traffic to get to evening classes on time. Next, sitting in the classroom and reading for hours until going home and finally getting to bed at 10 o’clock at night. Then, starting all over again the following morning. Graduation day, however, has made the challenges worthwhile.

And not just for Prysock, but for all the men who make up this diverse class of graduates. “If

we can all learn together,” said Prysock, “we can all work together.”

Looking over the roster of graduates, Moore, too, is proud. These are men who have followed divergent paths to get to this day, but share in one trait: diligence. “Four years of their apprenticeship training also includes four years of full-time employment,” which they also balanced with family life, said Moore, adding “it was great” to see two former ACAD students – Chatman and Bilkuei – follow their pathways all the way through apprenticeship.

As for Chatman, he plans to stay with GCS. And in a couple of years, he is eyeing re-enrollment in the D.C. Apprenticeship Academy to pursue HVAC, plumbing or electrical. Taking a cue from the keynote address, his goal is to take what he’s learned and just “keep going.” It’s an aspiration that his fellow graduates can embrace as well. □

## 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.

## 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.



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