

ACP provides construction career opportunities

The Alliance of Construction Professionals (ACP) is an industry-wide, labor-management committee dedicated to encouraging people to consider construction trades.

Executive vice president Mary Gregory has personally visited multiple classrooms and career fairs for junior high school, high school, and adult education students, and with the newly developed website, www.goodcareernow.com, hopes to reach even more people who might be interested in construction careers.

“We have spoken to hundreds of teachers, superintendents, career tech program directors, and guidance counselors about construction industry career paths,” said Gregory. “We want everyone to know that these are viable careers, they are a pathway onto college as well. The careers are very lucrative; the construction industry is a fast-paced, complex environment nowadays. It requires math, science, and problem-solving skills, reading comprehension, and critical thinking. Our construction workers can make a lot of money, and that money is truly well deserved because there’s a significant amount of brain power that goes into the industry in addition to the physicality.”

Gregory also takes students on job site walkthroughs, shop tours, and can even provide job shadowing opportunities. Volunteers have been asking how they can assist in ACP’s workforce development efforts and recently included A.A. Boos & Sons, Rudolph Libbe, Lathrop, Mosser, VM Systems, Spieker, RMF Nooter, OCP Contractors, and M&M Heating.

ACP, through the Associated General Contractors of NW Ohio (AGC), has worked with Toledo Public Schools to arrange a construction industry boot camp in June, which will provide students with the opportunity to get hands-on experience learning about different construction trades.

“It is a misconception that ‘anyone can paint, lay tile, polish cement, or work in heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC)’ This is completely false,” said Gregory. “A stable, safe, long-life structure needs to be constructed properly; our trained employees understand chemistry, algebra, geometry, physics, other sciences, infectious disease control, and more, as well as the art of their craft. For example, it takes years to become an effective glazier; I would not want anyone who has not honed their craft during



years of apprenticeship, followed by ongoing training as a journeyman, to work on the glass or safety doors in my multimillion dollar office, medical, or manufacturing facility.”

Gregory said she often encourages junior high and high school students to do well in math, science, and reading comprehension, because

those are skills that will become valuable later in life, particularly in the construction industry.

“Believe it or not, there’s geometry, algebra, and trigonometry involved, they need to understand physics and reading comprehension because they’re going to be given something and then told ‘go do it, make it happen’ and nobody is going to be looking over their shoulder,” she said. “They need to be self-sufficient, self-starters, but then when

they graduate from high school they can apply to go into an apprenticeship program.”

Most apprenticeship programs are four years, but can be three to five years, and provide students with specialized training that Gregory says is robust enough to count towards a two-year degree. In some programs, a student transferring to Owens Community College only needs a few more classes to earn their degree.

“Now the beauty of that is they didn’t pay for that degree,” she said. “They’re working and they’re getting their training from the industry. Basically, they’re getting an income, what we call ‘earn while you learn’, and then they can start working as journeymen once they graduate from the apprenticeship program. They can pursue additional education if they like, which many have done, and they take the path that they’re interested in. Some people love working in the field, being outside everyday, whereas others don’t mind going back into the office, sitting

behind a desk planning and managing.”

The ACP also targets college students, such as welding students at Terra Community College in Fremont, and even four-year institutions where they hope to find students interested in administrative or management positions such as estimators or project managers. Bowling Green State University (BGSU) and University of Toledo (UT) have invited ACP staff members to conduct mock interviews on campus that will prepare students for presenting themselves well, and to teach them the importance of learning about prospective employers.

“I try to get them excited by letting them know that if you’re a good student, if you enjoy working with your hands but also trying to solve a problem, and if you like to be active and outside, and you want to make a very nice living with healthcare and a pension, then this is a career path to consider,” said Gregory. “I also tell the kids that you can work in the field your entire career, or you can go into the office and do project management, or estimating, or sales, or even start your own company. I think our society has pushed so many people toward a four-year degree when we still need people to actually do things, build things, and make things happen.

“We have seen interest, and we have seen interest from really bright kids,” she continued. “This is, I can’t stress this enough, this is not an environment where a student who struggles in school should be sent, because you set that student up for further heartbreak if they can’t make it in this industry. I can say fast and critical thinking is very important, but there are other reasons why we’re targeting good students.”

Since the recession, Gregory said that Ohio has had to rely on construction labor unions from across the country, but that they would like to see more local students interested in becoming a part of this field.

“We definitely want to keep bringing good people into this industry because we will have some retirees going out, and like any industry, medical for example, we just want good people coming in,” she said. “One of the reasons we’re doing all this promoting is because we want a larger pool of good candidates considering our industry.”

