



CELEBRATING
55 YEARS

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ABC holds National Workforce Development Conference

March 12, 2015 - Rhode Island

Associated Builders & Contractors (ABC), a national association with 70 Chapters and 22,000 members across America held its third annual Workforce Development Conference from March 3rd through 6th at the Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention Center. Nearly 700 contractors, subcontractors, companies that support the construction industry, apprentices and craft professionals attended, along with staff from chapters and craft training facilities.

The primary focus of the Workforce Development Conference is education for ABC members including mechanical contractors, electrical contractors, safety professionals and workforce development professionals. There was a separate educational tract for each group, so members could enjoy three days of in-depth training in their particular area of expertise within the construction industry.

This conference, more than any other, is dedicated to ABC's strategic plan to help its members develop people, win work, and deliver that work safely, ethically and profitably for the betterment of the communities in which they work...all while following the Merit Shop philosophy of free enterprise. The conference is also of particular importance because it focuses on developing, educating and employing the construction workforce of the present and future. The future is extremely important because estimates show that because so many construction workers either retired or moved on during the recent recession, the industry is facing a shortage of as many as 1.7 million workers.

The centerpiece of the Workforce Development Conference is the National Craft Championships (NCC), which celebrates member firms' training and education efforts. Craft trainees from chapter and member firm training programs across the country come together to compete in the National Craft Championships. During this intense two-day event, young men and women compete in one of fifteen competitions, representing eleven crafts.

ABC knows the future of the industry relies on its ability to attract and retain the most talented individuals necessary to meet the nation's ever-increasing construction needs. ABC is leading the way in developing the merit shop construction industry workforce by offering programs, such as the NCC, that promote life-long learning experience and national recognition based on achievement at every career level.

The first National Craft Championships were held in 1987 with only a handful of participants competing in four craft competitions.

More than 25 years later, nearly 1,500 men and women have competed in what has grown to become one of the construction industry's most recognized and revered craft skills events, thanks to the dedication and hard work of ABC's member firms and chapters. This year, over 200 craft trainees participated, which is a new single-year record. Hopefully, this is another sign that the economy is rapidly recovering.

The Rhode Island chapter of ABC has a state-approved apprenticeship school, the RI Training Academy, which currently has over 210 apprentice trainees in nine crafts. The school is open to any individual with a high school diploma or GED. Most apprentices are sponsored by their employers, but some are there, on their own, to learn a skill that will lead to a brighter future for them and their families for years to come. To learn more about the RI Construction Training Academy, visit www.ricta.org.

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