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ABC working to diversify industry workforce - by Joe Barbone

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Joe Barbone, Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc. - Mass. Chapter

There is no value more central to ABC's philosophy than equal opportunity. Extending opportunity throughout the Massachusetts' construction industry was the focus when 75 minority general and subcontractors and ABC members met on January 19th in Mattapan.

Former ABC chairman Jim Rudolph and I were among the speakers at the event, as was one of ABC's newest board members: longtime member and owner of the Cruz Companies, John Cruz. John's father started this third-generation family company in 1947 as a carpentry subcontracting firm. After graduating from Wentworth Institute, John joined the firm as a superintendent and estimator. Under his leadership, the company grew, diversified and expanded into real estate development and property management, focusing mainly on low and moderate-income housing developments. Since then he has grown the company to become the largest minority construction and development firm in the region.

At the event John spoke about the successes and setbacks he has experienced and how ABC helped him along the way. ABC staff also spoke about the help they can provide, from the Gould Construction Institute's education and training offerings to the network of apprentices offered by the Merit Apprentice Program (MAP).

ABC's concerted effort to facilitate and enhance the construction industry's workforce requires diverse outreach and partnerships with young people, veterans, the minority community, woman owned businesses and more. This event is just the first step toward implementing the goal included in our strategic plan to provide opportunities and develop symbiotic relationships that will uplift current and future members, the association in general, and the construction industry as a whole.

It starts with recruitment, an area in which we need the help of all ABC members. John Cruz played a key role in organizing the minority contractor event, demonstrating that the best source of information for those thinking about joining ABC is our members. They can talk to prospective members about MAP, the Gould, and the many other benefits we offer.

Ultimately, we hope to jointly identify work opportunities throughout all parts of our communities and hire employees and companies for upcoming member projects as well as to identify possible opportunities for our members within the urban center of Boston. It all comes down to the principle of equal opportunity for all qualified contractors. Our minority contractor outreach is the latest example

of us acting on that belief.

Joe Barbone is the 2017 chairman of the Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc. – Mass. Chapter, Woburn, Mass. and is the president and CEO of Methuen Construction, Plaistow, N.H.

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