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ABC launches Building Mass Careers Pre-Apprenticeship & Leadership Program - by Joe Barbone

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Time and time again I hear from members that finding qualified employees is your most pressing challenge. We at the Massachusetts chapter of ABC hear you and are acting to ease this labor shortage.

In 2011, a time that pre-dated the shortage, the Merit Apprenticeship Program (MAP) gained state approval. MAP meets all state apprenticeship requirements, making it easier for member companies to work on public jobs. It also provides pools of pre-qualified workers that members can draw on to meet their needs.

But we didn't stop there. This November we plan to launch the Building Mass Careers Pre-Apprenticeship & Leadership Program. ABC is looking to partner with Malden High School, whose 5,000 s/f woodworking shop will serve as a training center for the program.

The pre-apprenticeship program is designed to recruit prospective employees interested in a career in construction, not just a job. We expect that the Gould Construction Institute (GCI) will offer participants a 75-hour general construction program, who will also be eligible for job shadowing with ABC member companies. The program will seek to instill a strong work ethic in its students, and we are working on grant funding to cover the first six months of students' tuition.

The Core Construction phase of the program begins in January 2018, with classes being held in the evenings at Malden High School. The program will teach students about the basics of our industry, OSHA 10 training and a hoisting license preparation course.

ABC is developing a "Building Mass Careers" website, which, like all these efforts, is a partnership between ABC, MAP and GCI. The website will highlight overlooked facts about construction, such as the fact that the industry employs more people worldwide than any other sector, and is projected to grow another 70% by 2025.

The website will also describe the rapidly evolving nature of construction and describe the many

advantages of a career in the industry. Construction offers high-paying careers without the massive loans associated with four-year college degrees.

Educating readers about the immediate opportunities available to qualified employees is another purpose of the website. There are about 70,000 Massachusetts job openings in 13 trades, with more than 20,000 openings for carpenters and electricians alone.

We're not the only ones who recognizes the many opportunities our industry offers. Governor Baker has issued a proclamation declaring October "Careers in Construction Month."

By letting people know how our industry has changed and what it has to offer, we feel confident that we can create a much-needed pipeline of future construction leaders. If you'd like to learn more about the Merit Apprenticeship Program in particular or our efforts more generally, please contact Morisset St. Preux at (781) 273-0123 or morisset@abcma.org.

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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