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Woburn Memorial High builds solid relationship with ABC

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Shown are Jordan Henry and Damian Ruggeri

For ABC member companies to continue to thrive, we must take a hard look at our talent pipeline. With an aging workforce that in some cases is not suited to keep up with exponential growth of the construction industry, we need to identify young people at the start of their career and expose them to the many opportunities our member companies can offer.

As we well know, the construction industry is about relationships, and a good case in point is the one ABC MA has been developing with Woburn Memorial High School. Our Building Mass Careers team has made multiple presentations to various students about construction. We held an industry roundtable, bringing in five ABC member firms to discuss trends in their sectors of the industry and their specific company hiring practices. Building Mass Careers hosted a three-day OSHA-10 Construction Outreach Safety and Health course attended by 18 students who received their OSHA 10 card. We are currently working to establish a job shadow and externship program in conjunction with ABC member contractors.

As a summer pilot program, Woburn High hired Jordan Henry, a member of the most recent class of graduates, to work and learn alongside the school's facilities manager, Damian Ruggeri. With plenty to do to prepare for the start of the school year, Damian says it's been a great help to him.

"What a great concept to have an aspiring construction worker shadow the high school facilities manager. Jordon was an important part of my team this summer," Ruggeri said. "He did everything from sweeping floors, painting, changing HVAC filters, replacing light bulbs, repairing furniture, changing ceiling tiles, as well as many other chores that popped up."

The facilities manager credited principal Jessica Callanan for the opportunity to have Jordon work with him this summer. "I hope we replicate this model during the school year and again in the summer months," Ruggeri said.

Jordan Henry

While Ruggeri was receiving such great help, Jordan Henry had the opportunity to learn about potential career pathways. With trade school applications in the works, he can begin to take control of his future by entering a growing industry with plenty of career opportunities – not just job opportunities.

“I have really enjoyed my summer working at Woburn High School. Ruggeri was so helpful and taught me a lot about facilities management. There is certainly a lot that goes into keeping a high school up to date,” he said. “I took Mr. Sullivan’s OSHA 10 course in June and that information helped me be much safer on the job,” he explained.

“The stairs and ladder safety, electrical, personal protective equipment, hand and power tool modules all helped me as I worked throughout the summer. I am excited to enter the construction industry, with the goal to become a licensed HVAC technician.”

Principal Callanan sees this as a successful pilot that can be expanded into an ongoing program that would give more students like Jordan a path to the construction industry post-graduation.

“What better way to orient young people to the construction industry than by allowing them to explore some of the different trades in a place they are familiar with...their high school,” she said. “I’m excited we have built a solid relationship with the Associated Builders and Contractors of Massachusetts. They have been tremendously supportive to our students, staff, and teachers.”

ABC intends to support these efforts in as much as possible. It is through efforts such as this that our Building Mass Careers initiative will move from concept to reality. If successful, we will bring obvious benefits to member companies who have an aging workforce that simply won’t be able to keep up with future demands.

Karl Hudson is the chairman of Associated Builders and Contractors Inc. -Mass. Chapter, Woburn and is vice president of L.C. Anderson, Inc., Brighton, Mass.

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