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## Newest pipefitters ready to build back the state - 92 apprentices graduate

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Dorchester, MA A new class of highly-skilled pipefitters and HVAC-refrigeration technicians from Pipefitters Local 537's apprentice program are ready to build and service the state's hospitals, laboratories, and schools as we emerge from the pandemic. 92 graduates from Mass., N.H., and R.I. completed their apprenticeship training, becoming official journeymen in the Local.

"As we return to a new normal, these graduates will play a key role in building back our region," said Tom Kerr, business manager and financial secretary-treasurer of Local 537. "We're immensely proud of the skill, craftsmanship, and character they've shown throughout their apprenticeships and especially over the past year. They're unstoppable."

When Local 537's Training Center was forced to close due to COVID-19 last year, most classroom

courses moved to an online format. Class sizes for in-person, hands-on training were also reduced significantly to ensure social distancing and follow adherence to COVID-19 protocols. Prioritizing safety — and meeting these new challenges head-on — helped apprentices continue courses without a beat.

“Our graduates and instructors did an incredible job adapting in these unique times,” said Local 537 Training Coordinator Paul McGrath. “Thanks to our readiness and their hard work, everyone completed their coursework on time. That’s a big achievement.”

The newly-minted tradesmen and tradeswomen will install and service ventilation systems, and build piping infrastructure throughout the region, ensuring buildings are well-prepared for a return to in-person work, learning, and more.

Their expertise also meets a clarion call President Biden recently made in announcing his American Jobs Plan. In his remarks, President Biden singled out pipefitters who will be critical in «replacing 100% of the nation’s lead pipes and service lines so every American, every child, can turn on a faucet or fountain and drink clean water.»

Local 537’s five-year curriculum trains apprentices to master everything from basic approaches to the latest cutting-edge tools and technology. As a result, Local 537 pipefitters, welders, and HVAC technicians are consistently ranked among the top piping professionals in the world. The graduating classes include nine veterans.

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