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## **ABC to host first in-person events in more than 14 months**

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Kyle Reagan

ABC Massachusetts recently announced its first in-person events in more than 14 months and I'm hopeful this return to normalcy will see many ABC members back together again. There is much to do and a lot of time to make-up for. Another graduating class of seniors are leaving our colleges, high schools, and tech schools and entering a robust, albeit erratic job market. Workforce development is one of ABC Massachusetts' most impactful endeavors as we seek to show Bay Staters who were displaced by the economic shutdowns that a great career in construction awaits.

In April, 15 students graduated from the Metro North Pre-Apprentice Construction and Facilities Maintenance Training Program (referred to as, PACMAN). The students represent five continents and the 160-hour program saw a 94% completion rate as students achieved near-perfect attendance! The graduation was an inspirational ceremony and ABC was thankful to have the opportunity to participate.

One graduate, John Musakeira, a refugee from Uganda, had been an estimator in his home country. But when he arrived here, people told him he could only get entry-level or low-skill work.

Now John says he's "spreading the gospel of this program" and he "will be an example to my community."

ABC MA board member Diana Hasan, the director of human resources at C.E. Floyd, volunteered her time interviewing a number of the students. Speaking at the graduation, Diana said, "You work in a field that can't wait to meet you."

The PACMAN curriculum includes an introduction to construction and facilities maintenance, financial literacy, and job readiness. Students completed a National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) core curriculum. As April was construction safety month, it's fitting that the pre-apprentices all completed OSHA 10-hour safety training, so they have a solid understanding of the importance of jobsite safety as they begin their careers in construction.

Additionally, the PACMAN program is providing graduates with job placement support. ABC member companies interested in learning more about this group of graduates anxious to get to work should contact Steve Sullivan, who worked with the students as an instructor, at [steve@abcma.org](mailto:steve@abcma.org) or (781) 281-6860.

Sullivan has been a catalyst for ABCMA's expanded workforce focus. Making PACMAN a reality required applying for a grant and building unique partnerships with organizations like; Winn Companies, International Institute of New England, CONNECT, MassHire Metro North Career Centers, and Medford Vocational Technical High School.

The Senator Kenneth J. Donnelly Workforce Success Grant, which ABC received in partnership with the Metro North Regional Employment Board, is funded through the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development and is administered by the Commonwealth Corp. It will fund two additional classes of students.

Even a global pandemic hasn't changed the importance of attracting more hardworking people like the ones who recently graduated from the PACMAN program into lucrative careers in construction. As COVID-19 loosens its grip, workforce development will continue to be job one. In addition to its importance, the recent graduation showed that it's also one of our chapter's most inspiring functions.

Kyle Reagan is the chairman of Associated Builders and Contractors Inc.-Mass. Chapter, and is CEO of DECCO Inc., Townsend, MA.

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