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IBEW and NECA partner on diversifying electrical industries

December 23, 2022 - Front Section

QUINCY, MA A partnership of union workers and business contractors has made significant strides in transforming the region's electrical trades industry to include greater numbers of women and people of color. Expanding this partnership to produce more minority and women-owned businesses, as well as promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) throughout the industry was center stage at a first-of-its-kind summit in Quincy.

The Turning Commitment Into Action summit illustrated IBEW Local 103 and NECA's diversity, equity and inclusion priorities, including:

Increasing awareness about public sector policies and regulations requiring increased DEI in projects.

Creating roadmaps for contractors to integrate DEI best practices in their business planning, proposal responses and bids.

Illustrating how essential diversity, equity and inclusion is to the growth of the industry and to the individual career paths of women and people of color.

The summit also featured remarks from Senator Lydia Edwards, and civil-rights leader Tanisha Sullivan.

Through apprenticeship programs and efforts like Empower DEI, an advanced and accelerated support program for experienced, licensed minority and women electricians seeking to open their own businesses, this partnership between workers and business has expanded the level of diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout the Greater Boston construction industry, opening up family-sustaining careers for workers and contractors.

"I became the first Black woman to serve as a Business Agent in any union construction trades in Boston nearly five years ago. I was able to help people every day by making their families and communities stronger. With helping them start the same rewarding career that gave me so much, I continue to advocate to make sure highly-trained members constantly have new work opportunities," said Kenell Broomstein, KB-Mac. "I think it also helps for them to know the journey I made to owning my own business; that it is something they can aspire to as well."

"I can't say how important it is when starting a new business to have that support when it comes to

things like training and networking opportunities,” said Edson Hilaire, who immigrated from Haiti at the age of 8, and started his business, EH Electric, in 2005.

The electrical union recently welcomed its most diverse class of students in program history, with women and people of color comprising 50% of the class. Thanks to the union’s support, a growing number of women and minorities have created flourishing careers paying middle-class wages with strong benefits, as well as becoming electrical contractors.

“I moved here from Thailand in search of better economic opportunities,” said Sasirin Suriyamongkol, 3rd-year apprentice. “In 2015, when I came here, I worked as an au pair, earning \$195.75 for a 40-hour work week. I wasn’t able to make ends meet with this income but with my union’s apprenticeship training program, I was able to start my journey to becoming a Telecom technician apprentice and earn a good living.”

Telecom apprentices make over \$60 per hour as a union apprentice.

“We are proud to celebrate and guide the next generation of electricians and technicians as they power their futures in the ever-growing electrical construction industry,” said Kristen Gowin, Executive Manager, NECA.

“Diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility are at the core of our efforts,” said Lou Antonellis, Business Manager/Financial Secretary at IBEW, Local 103. “We must provide resources to those who lack economic opportunity, and create equitable access to well-paying jobs to economically distressed communities, women, and people of color.”

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