

Organizations help youth of today become builders of tomorrow

Construction is one of the nation's largest industries, with 8.3 million workers. By 2012, there will be a need for an additional 1.1 million special trades contractors in the industry (these statistics do not include the management, supervisory, and other professional positions). For entrepreneurial spirits who are interested in running their own businesses, construction offers a broad spectrum of opportunities.

Recently, Austin Community College, (ACC) the Home Builders Association, (HBA) and Austin YouthWorks (part of the YouthBuild U.S.A program) met with Home Builders Institute (HBI) representatives to discuss how to spark young peoples' interest in the construction field, as well as how students may obtain required education and eventually enter the thriving industry. An important topic discussed was the proposed National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) chapter at ACC and how the group will coordinate with the various construction-related entities in Austin.

HBI, the workforce development arm of NAHB, is one of the associations that offer technical assistance to the YouthBuild program. Dick Pierce, senior director of programs at American YouthWorks, an organization that assists youth and adults in completing valuable education, job training, and life skills, explained how the meeting would impact Austin's youth.

"We are very excited about ACC's new NAHB chapter and look forward to working with ACC and the HBA of Greater Austin to make this a reality and to have our young people be eligible for affiliate membership and activities," he said. "This NAHB chapter should provide a focal point for young people interested in construction and a critical mass of candidates for job fairs, site visits, internships, and other events with the HBA and member firms.

"The ultimate goal is for our youth to complete training and earn their high school diploma and \$4,600 scholarship, be hired by local construction companies, and complete a two-year construction degree at ACC," Pierce continued. "It's important that young people continue their education and experience and are able to grow and flourish within this industry."

The NAHB Student Chapters Program provides students interested in construction-related fields — including real estate, architecture, engineering, and the trades — a chance to learn more about residential building through membership in the association. The student chapters, with the support of the HBA of Greater Austin, have opened the door for many young men and women into the building community through various career development services including speakers, internships, job op-



Ken Blaker
President,
Home Builders
Association of
Greater Austin

portunities, scholarships and community projects.

Additionally, the local American YouthWorks chapter teaches youth and adults about important building-related programs, including Casa Verde Builders (CVB), a home-building program, and American YouthWorks GreenBuilders.

The CVB project-based education program teaches participants hands-on construction skills by building single-family, energy-efficient affordable housing in East Austin communities. This program allows students to improve their neighborhoods while obtaining their high school diploma or GED. Since CVS is part of the AmeriCorps National Volunteer Service program, CVB members also earn a living allowance and are provided child and health care.

In the AYM GreenBuilders program, students learn to build affordable, energy-efficient homes. Members of AYM Greenbuilders are graduates of the CVS program, and are constantly learning to create environmentally conscious homes. The group develops custom-built homes and spec homes in Austin while continuing to comply with the City of Austin's Green Building Program.

Among the numerous educational aspects the HBI student chapters provide, a key factor is encouraging participants to explore some of the less publicized fields such as home integration technology, land acquisition, forward planning, roofing inspection, warranty coordination and window treatment design.

In addition to a recognized curriculum, student memberships offers an opportunity to network with builders and plan for a solid career in the building industry. Participants are often invited to HBA monthly meetings, which grooms them to become members upon graduation.

Thanks to the student programs through American YouthWorks and ACC, participants will gain a worldly perspective of the building industry, while accumulating academic and hands-on expertise during the process. Those interested should take a moment to learn more about HBI and the local student programs, for career options in skilled trades, professional, and technical positions within the construction industry.

To learn more, visit the Home Builders Association of Greater Austin's website at AustinHomeBuilders.com; or contact Naomi Bludworth, Communications & Education Director at Naomi@hbaAustin.com.