

Painters and tapers training center hires Phelps as new coordinator

Jim Phelps is the new apprenticeship coordinator at the Painters & Drywall Finishers Regional Training Center. He succeeds Bill Regan, who retired (see article below).

Phelps, 45, was the construction and maintenance training administrator at Hawaiian Electric Co., where he oversaw a program of 250 apprentices training to be outside line-



Jim Phelps

men. Prior to that he taught school in Hawaii for nearly 10 years. He left the classroom for a job designing and developing curriculum for the Hawaiian school district. That led to the position at Hawaiian Electric.

"My education path and my construction path, it all came together," he said.

A native of Anchorage, Alaska, Phelps followed in his father's footsteps as a school teacher. "My father was an educator, and he built homes in the summer," he said. "As a kid, I would help him build houses. I learned a lot from him."

Phelps received an academic scholarship to the University of South Dakota, where he earned a bachelor's degree in elementary and secondary education.

After college he moved to Hawaii to teach. His brother went with him, and together they co-owned a successful remodeling and construction company.

Phelps recently decided to return to the mainland to accommodate his growing family. During a job search, he saw that the Painters and Tapers apprenticeship program in Oregon was looking for a new

coordinator.

"I saw what they were doing here and I was very impressed," he said.

Phelps says he's still in a bit of a learning curve for the painting industry, but it's been made much easier because of the knowledgeable staff that's already in place—office manager Joanne Nordquist, secretary Connie Benson, and full-time instructor Harry Kalin.

"They are fantastic," he said. "I call us the Core 4."

Phelps takes over a 7,440 square-foot training center that features a state-of-the-art blasting booth to teach sandblasting, a full spray booth, and the latest model virtual spray machine, which simulates and scores how well you apply paint to a surface.



New painters and tapers apprenticeship coordinator Jim Phelps gets acquainted with the state-of-the-art training center in Northeast Portland.

Kalin and seven part-time instructors (all journeyman members of Painters and Drywall Finishers Local 10), teach all the nuances of faux finishes, and a couple instructors even teach the lost art of paint color mixing (most of which is now computerized).

On the drywall finishing side there are structural wall mock-ups and rolling modules that

feature every interior angle and curve known.

"I feel very fortunate to be coming in at this time, when this is all coming together," Phelps said. "We have powerful training tools here—things that not many other training centers have. I tip my hat to the JATC board for that."

Phelps says his primary goal will be to make apprentices and

journey workers the best that they can be. The training center offers continuing education classes for journey-level painters and tapers.

"I want to keep this going," he said. "We are never too old to stop learning new skills."

Phelps lives in Vancouver, Wash., with his wife and two children, ages 5 and 2.

Longtime Local 10 member Bill Regan retires as apprentice coordinator

Bill Regan has retired as apprenticeship coordinator for the Painters & Tapers Regional Training Center.

Regan, 62, has been the coordinator since 2002, where he has trained thousands of men and women to be skilled painters, drywall finishers, and reliable workers.

"A good portion of my job was to try to give people a sense of accomplishment," he said.

Some promising apprentices never pan out, he said, while others that you thought would never make it turn out to be stellar.

A graduate of Clackamas High School, Regan joined Painters Local 10 in 1973. He was attending community college to get into the electronics and telecommunications field when he realized he didn't like being inside all the time.

He knew some guys from a neighborhood tavern he frequented in Northwest Portland who were bridge painters.

"They worked eight to nine

months a year and made lots of money," he said. "That sounded pretty good to me."

Regan worked both in commercial and industrial painting during a time when there were more than 100 union shops. He was active in the union, and in 1992 was elected financial secretary. In that position, Regan was a trustee on both the Painters and Drywall Finishers joint apprenticeship training committees. In those days, the committees leased a building in Northeast Portland to house their training center.

Just a few years prior, in the late 1980s, a poor economy and the rise of double-breasted shops (contractors who bid work both union and nonunion), caused membership to tumble. It got so bad that the training program was forced to shut down. It re-opened a few years later, and thrived in the boom years of the 1990s.



Bill Regan

The 100th anniversary booklet of Painters Local 10 credits financial secretary Regan and business rep John Kirkpatrick for overseeing "our miraculous recovery."

As apprenticeship coordinator, Regan oversaw a staff of one full time instructor, four part-time instructors, and an office manager. He was involved in the formation of the Painters Union Management Partnership (PUMP) in 2004 and the accompanying Safety Training Awards Recognitions (STAR) program, which gives bonuses to painters who enroll in continuing education classes.

Regan was active with the apprenticeship coordinators group, where coordinators from all crafts meet regularly to share ideas about training, recruitment, and to discuss other issues and concerns.

Regan also played a large role in the purchase of the current

training center.

"The committees had talked for years about buying a building," Regan said. "But it never materialized."

That changed following the Great Recession of 2008. With the economy in recovery mode and the real estate market still soft, the Painters JATC decided the time was right to buy a building.

"We spent a couple of years looking at commercial property," Regan said. In 2012, a real estate agent showed them a building at 135th and NE Whitaker—just a few blocks from where they were renting space. They bought the building.

Regan said training definitely has changed over the years. Today there are virtual painting machines, and paint is mixed by computers. "Six-dollar-a-gallon paint now costs \$600 a gallon," he said jokingly.

In retirement Regan will spend more time with his wife Carole, and work on his boat and a vintage Austin Healy.

Apprenticeship Open

The Oregon/SW Washington Painters JATC, and the Oregon/SW Washington Drywall Finishers JATC, are accepting applications for new apprentices. Currently there is a shortage of workers in the trades, so finding a job shouldn't be difficult.

The apprenticeship consists of 6,000 hours of on-the-job training, and an additional 432 hours of related classroom instruction. Related training is usually conducted in the evening and on Saturdays, on the apprentice's own time. Typically it takes three years to complete the program. Apprentices are paid 70 percent of journeyman wages, plus benefits, while they learn.

Applications can be made in person Tuesdays from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (closed during the noon hour). The training center is located at 13521 NE Whitaker Way, Portland. That's two blocks north of Sandy Blvd., near the Costco store. For more information, call 503-287-4856.