

Subsidized child care helps parents enter building trades

By Noah Wass

For women and people of color looking to get into high-wage careers in the building trades, construction pre-apprenticeship programs can be a hugely important first step. But the programs are unpaid, and can last four to eight weeks. For parents who want to take part, finding childcare and paying for it has been one of the biggest barriers to entry. Now, a program of Labor's Community Service Agency (LCSA) funded by the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) is eliminating that barrier by providing free and subsidized childcare.

Since April 2019, the Pre-Apprenticeship Child Care Initiative (PACCI) has helped 19 participants complete pre-apprenticeship programs, says LCSA Executive Director Eryn Byram, who worked with International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 48 member Christina Daniels to set up the program.

PACCI is open to all, but every participant to date has been a woman or person of color.



Inez Merida says childcare made it possible for her to get into Local 290.

PACCI program director Jackie Witt—also a member of IBEW Local 48—helps each participant find a childcare provider that works for them, and PACCI pays the provider directly.

Tiria Jones, a single mother of six, says PACCI's childcare program was critical to her successful completion of Oregon Tradeswomen's eight-week pre-apprenticeship program in March.

"Jackie got me signed up and

was able to get my children care for morning and after school programs while my youngest one stayed home," Jones said.

Thanks to PACCI, Jones is now a steamfitter apprentice in Plumbers and Fitters Local 290. She wants to be a welder, and she's encouraging her daughter to go straight from school into an apprenticeship program, so she can advance while she's young.

Inez Merida says she would not have been able to start her

eight-week pre-apprenticeship program without Witt's support. With her partner working full time, she was staying home to care for her four kids, age 16, 13, 8 and 3. Adding childcare to the cost of Portland rent for a family of six would have exceeded her household's single income, Merida says. And with class beginning at 7 a.m., finding an early morning childcare provider was a serious challenge.

Merida says Witt helped her find a place that would work with her schedule, and when she graduated and was no longer eligible for PACCI funding, Witt connected her with funding from Oregon Tradeswomen Inc. and helped her keep the same childcare provider. Merida is now enrolled as an apprentice at Plumbers and Steamfitters Local 290. Currently employed by JH Kelly, she hopes one day to start her own outfit (through the union of course) and hire other women to do residential plumbing.

Union card gets \$1 off beer

Six Portland bars and restaurants are now offering a \$1 discount to patrons who show their union card. All six venues are owned by Portland restaurateur Josh Johnston. The discount came about after Johnston got to know Operating Engineers Local 701 Business Manager Jimbo Anderson when the two collaborated on a St. Patrick's Day fundraiser for the Children's Cancer Association. The six locations are:

- **Cadillac Cafe**, 1801 NE Broadway
- **The Independent Sports Bar & Grill**, 225 SW Broadway
- **North 45 Pub**, 517 NW 21st Ave
- **Paddy's Bar & Grill**, 65 SW Yamhill St
- **Produce Row Cafe**, 204 SE Oak St
- **Satellite Tavern**, 5101 N Interstate Ave.

At Cadillac Cafe, a union card gets \$1 a mimosa or Bloody Mary. At the other five, it's good for \$1 off any beer. There's no limit to the discounts, except patrons must be 21 or over. "All restaurants are having a hard time right now," Johnston said. "For people who want to come out and have a meal and a drink, the discount is a way for us to say thanks to the union community."



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