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OPINION

Apprenticeships to Strengthen Middle Class

Learning a trade
key to honest, blue-
collar life

BY DR. KARIN EDWARDS

At one time, the manufacturing sector of the American economy was the backbone of the strong middle class.



There were days when a young man or woman could walk out of high school and into a solid factory job that paid for the American dream – a house, a good standard of living, and a little extra cash to put away to send the kids to college.

We haven't lived in that America for a long time. Manufacturing is still a significant part of the economy, but over the decades many factory jobs have left our shores in search of cheaper labor, to be replaced in large part by lower-paying, service-sector jobs.

Believe me when I say, though, that there still exists a career path for people who place value on knowing a trade, working with their hands, and living an honest, blue-collar life – and the first step on that path is apprenticeship.

There is a growing need in America for people to work the kinds of jobs that can never be outsourced: electricians, welders, millwrights, carpenters, fabricators, stationary engineers, industrial mechanics, and the like. As the Baby Boom generation ages out of the workforce, the demand for these workers will only increase.

To give you some idea of the scope of possible career opportunities in the trades at the moment, consider the building boom currently under way in the Portland area.

According to the Portland Business Journal, the construction industry in Oregon added 104,800 jobs in 2017, an increase of 10.5 percent over the previous year. Many of those jobs are being created in Portland – in the neighborhood of \$8 billion is expected to be spent on public

projects alone in the next five years – and where construction is taking place, there is a need for skilled workers.

For those people ready to step into a career in the trades, the question is “How do I get started?” The answer, as it is for so many careers these days, is community college.

At Portland Community College's Swan Island Trades Center, pre-apprenticeship students can learn the basics of a career in the trades as they prepare to apply for a registered apprenticeship governed by a state Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee (JATC).

There are many certified pre-apprenticeship programs in Oregon; what sets PCC's

diversify the ranks of our trades students. Like many lines of work, the trades have been for many years dominated by men and, to a lesser extent, by white people. PCC's trades programs are directly addressing these imbalances and creating opportunities for underrepresented communities by recruiting more women and minority students, and by offering courses like Equity in the Trades. This class covers the long history of inequity in the skilled trades, introduces strategies to facilitate positive change, and empowers students to be effective advocates for greater inclusivity on the job.

PCC's Welding program offers a good example of this. Over the past five years,

And with the advent of a new, first-of-its-kind partnership with Madden Industrial Staffing – an employment agency for industrial workers – a new horizon of apprenticeship opportunities is open. PCC/MAP (short for PCC/Madden Apprenticeship Program), which came online in January of this year, harnesses Madden's vast network of industry connections to pair apprentice Industrial Fabricator/Welders with employment opportunities and work experiences that advance them along their career path. PCC serves as the program's educational provider, designing and delivering instruction in innovative ways that maximize students' access to gainful employment. Madden's connections also fa-

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apart is the breadth of its curriculum and the amount of workplace exposure that students receive before graduation.

Students in the Pre-Trades Career Pathway – a one-year certification program – receive a broad orientation to the trades: terminology, a 30-hour OSHA safety training, materials handling, hand and power tool use, task planning, construction methods, and much more. In addition, they receive a thorough introduction to the kinds of measurements and calculations that tradespeople conduct every day on job sites of all kinds, as well as training on how to use modern measuring tools like micrometers, calipers, dial indicators, and the like.

It's important, too, to note that – in accordance with our core values as an institution – PCC is making a concerted effort to

since 2013, the number of women enrolled in the program has grown by nearly 50 percent. It's by diversifying the training ranks of tradespeople that we'll eventually see more diverse ranks on the job.

Taken together, the knowledge and experience imparted by the Pre-Trades Career Pathway leaves a pre-apprenticeship student about as prepared to step into a full apprenticeship as they could possibly be. PCC's pre-apprenticeship program isn't a guaranteed ticket to a full apprenticeship, but it stands students in good stead: Of those students who took the Trades Preparation course in the past year (and who responded to PCC's inquiries), 36 percent reported either a successful placement in a registered apprenticeship or finding other employment in the trades.

cilitate an ongoing dialogue between PCC and industry experts, helping to ensure that PCC's training curricula remain at the cutting edge.

The world is changing, it's true, and the workplace along with it. But the old adage that says if you work hard and study hard, good things will happen -- still holds true. If you're willing to put in the time, PCC can help you get there.

Dr. Karin Edwards is president of Portland Community College's Cascade Campus. To learn more about PCC's pre-apprenticeship programs, visit pcc.edu/programs/apprenticeship/pre-trades.html. Pre-Trades information sessions are held on the first Tuesday of every month at the Swan Island Trades Center, 6400 N. Cutter Circle in Portland.

Using Violence Wrong Way to Make a Point

BY DARYL TURNER

Like many Portlanders and Oregonians, I anticipated that the dueling protests in Waterfront Park on Aug. 4 would become a more dangerous and volatile situation than it did.



I'm thankful that our officers were there to maintain general public safety and, to the degree possible, provide a safe venue for those who truly sought to peacefully protest.

Growing up in the 1960s I remember watching the peaceful protest marches led by Martin Luther King Jr.

Although Dr. King's safety was con-

stantly in danger, not once did you see Dr. King hiding his face with a bandana or mask. Not once did you see Dr. King wearing a ballistic vest or helmet during a protest. And never did you see Dr. King throwing rocks, bricks, or bottles at police and destroying property during his peaceful protest.

Through his peaceful approach, Dr. King made his point and the world followed.

Much of what we saw on our waterfront that Saturday was far from Dr. King's peaceful approach to fighting back hate.

I deplore the thought of hate speech and racist rhetoric openly advertised on the streets of Portland. However, we are sworn to protect the Constitution of the

United States. What we saw on Saturday was violent behavior. And it was that behavior that prompted police action—and rightly so.

Portlanders are tired of having their public safety jeopardized by groups of people that seek to use violence to get their point across. Portlanders are tired of hundreds of thousands of their hard-earned tax dollars going towards the cleanup of rocks, bottles, bricks, and bottles with hazardous fluids thrown by some protesters during what is billed as a peaceful protest. Portlanders are tired of the national reputation of being called the civil disobedience center of America when violence is the tool of choice by protestors.

To those officers who endured violent

behavior and took prompt action to maintain public safety: Thank you.

I also want to thank Chief Outlaw for her message supporting the work that the officers put in during the protests and calling out those individuals who threw rocks, bottles, explosive devices, and bio-hazards.

Her comments to local media were informative and explained how those in the crowd who were committing acts of violence dictated our police response. The tactics and strategies used prevented a potentially catastrophic outcome to a situation that grabbed media attention nationwide.

Daryl Turner is president of the Portland Police Association.