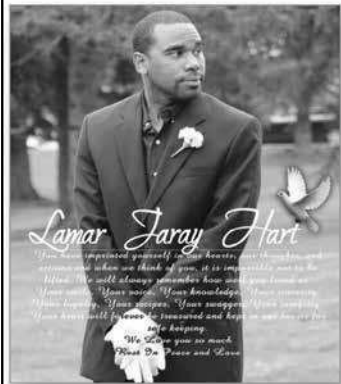


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**Monday, December 31 6:30 pm until 1:00 am.**  
 Cocktail hour begins at 6:30, dinner served 7:30 til 9:00

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**Dinner Package \$30**  
 Includes the above plus reserved seating and buffet dinner

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2019 after hours crowd welcome until 1:00 am,  
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PHOTO BY DAVID GREENIDGE

Local construction job training participants hold their certifications of completion after graduating from a cost-free construction training program offered by Portland's National Urban Housing and Economic Community Development Corporation. The program uniquely reaches out to help people of color, those with prior incarceration and veterans.

# Community Healing

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

ically.

"The answer was we have a record and no one will hire us. So what we said is we wanted to find them a living wage job that can help sustain them so that they could really secure the future," Greenidge said.

Skilled trades and construction jobs are some of the most in-demand in the country right now due to a retiring baby-boomer workforce and a lack of emphasis in vocational training in public education over the last decade, according to Forbes magazine. Yet even as conventional college tuition continues to sky-rocket and place students in insurmountable debt, often with few employment options, the skilled trades offer livable wages right away.

The affordable housing component is important, too, Greenidge said, to ensure that disenfranchised community members can have a shot at not just staying alive, but thriving.

"It really cements their position in our current boom that's happening in the greater Portland area where people are thriving, people are growing, and businesses are coming in. And we wanted everybody in our community to survive and thrive," he said.

Thanks to the NUHECDC efforts, 20 townhomes, collectively called Brunswick Commons, will open at the end of the month with prices ranging from \$299,000 to \$315,000 for three bedroom units. Ten of the lower-priced homes are located at 28 N.E. 109th Ave. and

the other 10, at a slightly higher price and for more square footage, are located at 10859 E. Burnside St.

For first time buyers, "The units are not only affordable, they're well-built, located right on the MAX line, and are eligible for a 10-year property tax abatement," Greenidge said.

The organization's free job training and life skills programs are open to all while still aiming to help people of color, at-risk youth, distressed veterans, and prior offenders.

"We have a real diverse group of people come in. We have whites, blacks, Latinos, Indians," Greenidge said.

A lot of the referrals for jobs training come through probation and parole officers because they have made contact with people coming out of incarceration wishing to turn their lives around.

Greenidge said most of those who graduate from the program, on average about 35 per year for the past three years, start making a livable wage income within a couple years. Over 100 people have graduated the courses, most of who were placed in jobs right afterwards, he said.

"They start out at about \$14-\$15 an hour but their wages seem to go up very quickly...they've come back and told us they're making well into the \$20 and up range, \$20-\$25," he said.

Greenidge partners with five other community non-profits to spread the word of the program, including Central City Concern, the Native American Youth and Family Center, Southeast Works,

Portland Community College, and Volunteers of America.

In addition to basic construction skills, mostly carpentry, in what Greenidge describes as a "pre-apprenticeship" model, the instruction incorporates the learning of basic life skills throughout the lessons.

"Life skills is critical because we teach them team building, we teach them how to resolve conflicts, money matters, anger management, how to project your future job situation and how to work through any obstacles that come up on the job," Greenidge said.

Though only about 50 percent of the initially enrolled students normally make it to graduation, due mostly to low attendance or a poor attitude, the door is left open to them should they decide to come back.

"My goal is to really just help people who just need a second chance, second, third, and fourth chance," Greenidge said.

In order to connect the students with jobs at the end of the course, Greenidge brings in union representatives and non-union contractors to facilitate information on how to apply to a full apprenticeship program or arrange interviews, respectively.

The next NUHECDC construction course begins Jan. 7 and lasts 60 days, Mondays through Fridays from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. each day. Not only is the class no-cost, but each student will receive a \$100 weekly stipend for completion of each weekly session. Those interested in joining the class should contact Sandra Jackson at 971-302-6615.