



Industry Led. Community Focused.

APRIL 2026 E-NEWSLETTER

Chicagoland Workforce

Illinois Works Will County Graduate Take The Next Step into the Trades

Taylor Dobson, graduate of the [HIRE360's Illinois Works Will County Pre-Apprenticeship Program](#), is taking the next step in her career after beginning her apprenticeship with [Carpenters Local 174](#) through sponsorship from [Power Circle Construction](#).

Before entering the program, Taylor came from a different career path but had a goal of building a future in the trades. At HIRE360, she gained hands-on training, industry certifications, and support with applications and test preparation. The program helped her build a strong foundation of skills that positioned her for this opportunity. Today, Taylor's on a path toward stable, long-term careers in the trades!



New Career Path Begins for Asante McKinney in the Trades

Asante McKinney has been accepted into a paid trainee position with [International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers](#), marking a major step forward in her transition into the construction industry. A graduate of HIRE360's Illinois Works [Will County Pre-Apprenticeship Program](#), Asante shifted from a career in dental health and education to pursue a long-standing interest in the trades she hadn't previously been able to access.

While completing the program, she balanced overnight work, raising her young son, and navigating personal challenges, all while building the skills and preparation needed to take that next step. Today, Asante is beginning her journey in bricklaying, backed by a strong foundation and new opportunities ahead.



Mentorship Session Highlights Pathways to Homeownership

At our March mentoring session, HIRE360 participants explored how careers in the trades can support long-term stability, including homeownership. With guidance from [Wells Fargo](#) Home Mortgage Consultant [Vipul Gandhi](#), Realtor Oneia Washington, and Polli Townsend, Senior AVP, Business Development Program Consultant for [Union Plus](#), Builder, and Corporate Mortgage, candidates learned about credit, loan qualification, and how to navigate the homebuying process.

The session also included updates on current job opportunities from HIRE360's Industry Representative team. We're grateful to Wells Fargo and our partners for supporting this effort and helping participants plan for long-term stability.



Illinois Works Cook County Cohort Visits Ironworkers Local 63

Our Cook County [Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program](#) recently visited [Ironworkers Local 63](#) for an inside look at what it takes to build a career in the ironworker trade. Participants heard directly from union leadership about the expectations, day-to-day realities, and the steps to enter an apprenticeship. Our cohort gained application guidance to firsthand insights that offered a clear view of the path to success in the trades.

Thank you to Jason Butz, Apprentice Coordinator at Ironworkers Local 63, for sharing your time and expertise and helping guide the next generation of skilled trades professionals.

Constellation Driving Opportunity

Through a partnership with [Constellation](#) and [Vehicles for Change](#), HIRE360 is helping expand access to reliable transportation for individuals working toward careers in the trades. This initiative provides restored vehicles at a low cost, making it easier for participants to get to job sites, training, and essential services. Access to transportation plays a critical role in maintaining employment and long-term stability.

We need your help! [Donate a vehicle or learn more today!](#)



Constellation is proud to partner with Vehicles for Change to help individuals and families gain access to reliable transportation and economic opportunity.

ABOUT VEHICLES FOR CHANGE

Vehicles for Change is a nonprofit organization that accepts donated vehicles, restores them, and provides them at a low-cost to local individuals and families who need reliable transportation to work, school, and essential services.

YOUR SUPPORT DRIVES REAL CHANGE

- Families get access to reliable vehicles
- Transportation makes employment possible and sustainable
- Greater financial stability and independence
- 8200+ cars awarded and over 28,000 lives changed

DONATING A CAR IS EASY

- Free nationwide vehicle pickup
- All cars, trucks, vans, and SUVs accepted (running or not)
- Avoid selling or maintaining an unused vehicle
- Eliminate insurance and storage concerns
- Get the maximum tax deduction

SCAN TO GET STARTED



vehiclesforchange.org

Current Secures up to \$45M to Scale Great Lakes RENEW and the Regional Circular Water Economy

A major investment in water innovation is creating new workforce opportunities across the region. [Current](#) recently secured up to \$45 million in federal funding from the [National Science Foundation](#) to expand [Great Lakes RENEW](#), a regional effort focused on advancing water solutions and growing the “blue economy.”

As part of this effort, workforce development remains a key focus. In its first phase, the initiative has already supported training for more than 560 workers and connected over 1,200 young people to STEM pathways tied to water careers, with HIRE360 supporting workforce training and career pathways. The next phase will continue to expand career pathways across the Great Lakes region, connecting more individuals to training and opportunities in water, construction, and clean energy fields. We’re proud to partner with Current on this work and to support the continued growth of workforce pathways tied to the region’s water economy.

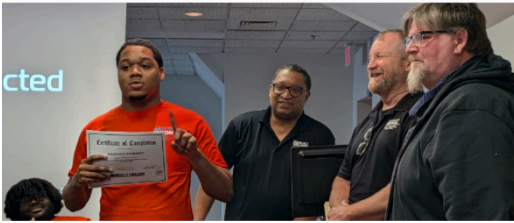


Read More, Link in Bio

Central and Southern Illinois Workforce

The **Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program** is opening doors to the future of clean energy in Illinois. Designed to recruit and prepare candidates from across the state, the program provides a pathway into unionized clean energy construction jobs—careers that offer stability, opportunity, and growth.

Interested in pursuing a career in the construction and building trades through the free Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program? [Learn more about careers in the clean-energy industry.](#)



Danville Climate Works Graduates Mark a Milestone

Congratulations to the latest graduates of HIRE360's [East Central Illinois Building and Construction Trades Council Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program](#) in Danville! Participants completed hands-on training and earned industry-recognized credentials—including OSHA, First Aid/CPR, MC3, and Fundamentals of Building Green—that prepared them for next steps in the union building trades and clean energy construction.

Thank you to the East Central Illinois Building and Construction Trades Council, instructors, and partners who supported this cohort throughout the program. Programs like Climate Works help prepare Illinois residents for in-demand careers across the state. We look forward to seeing these graduates continue building their careers.

New Report: A Public Health Imperative and Workforce Opportunity

Illinois faces a major challenge replacing lead service lines statewide—but this critical infrastructure work also presents a powerful opportunity to create jobs, expand training pathways, and strengthen communities most affected by lead exposure.

A newly released Illinois-focused report developed by [Current](#), [Elevate](#), HIRE360, and [Metropolitan Planning Council](#) outlines how lead service line replacement can protect public health while supporting workforce growth, integrating apprenticeships, and delivering long-term community impact.

Read the full report and recommendations [here](#).

Can replacing Illinois' toxic lead pipes lead to a workforce boon? | [WBEZ](#)

Opinion: Illinois' lead pipe crisis presents a workforce opportunity | [Crain's Chicago Business](#)

Meet Angela Varnum, Who Supports Participants in East Central Illinois

If you've gone through the HIRE360 [Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program](#) in Champaign or Danville, you've likely met Program Coordinator Angela Varnum at [East Central Illinois Building and Construction Trades Council](#). With decades of experience in the trades, she's often the first point of contact for participants, and they continue to rely on her long after the program ends. She helps people stay on track, work through challenges, and build confidence as they prepare for careers in the trades.

Angela's approach is grounded in showing up and building real relationships. She knows many participants come in unsure or skeptical, so she focuses on earning early trust and making sure they know someone is in their corner. That support can make the difference between someone stepping into a new career or falling off track. Whether it's a quick check-in or helping someone think through next steps, she stays connected well beyond graduation. As Angela puts it, "This work matters to me because while it may look like we are changing one life at a time, we are truly changing generations."

We're grateful to Angela and the East Central Illinois Building and Construction Trades Council for the role they play in supporting participants in taking the next step toward careers in the trades.



Business & Supply Chain



HIRE360 Leadership Joins JPMorgan Chase Accelerate Program in New York

Executive Director Jay Rowell and Director of Business Development and Diverse Supply Chain Deborah Whitaker represented HIRE360 at [JPMorgan Chase](#)'s Accelerate program for nonprofit leaders in New York. The program brought together nonprofit leaders from around the world for structured, peer-based learning focused on real-world leadership challenges with 228 JPMorgan Chase leaders.

During the program, HIRE360 shared insights from its work connecting individuals to careers in the construction trades and supporting contractors across Illinois. The experience created space to exchange ideas, strengthen leadership approaches, and explore new ways to expand impact. We're grateful to JPMorgan Chase for bringing together changemakers committed to strengthening nonprofit organizations and their impact!

Lathrop Connects Highlights Upcoming Contracting Opportunities

HIRE360 joined [LR Contracting](#) for Lathrop Connects: Section 3 Contractors Forum, where contractors learned about subcontracting opportunities tied to the final phase of the Lathrop

Homes South Campus preservation work. The forum also gave contractors the opportunity to present their capabilities directly to the project team.

Dozens of businesses came prepared with capability statements and brief presentations, highlighting their experience and readiness to perform. HIRE360's Director of Business Development Deborah Whitaker delivered welcome remarks and helped bring contractors into the room. Thank you to LR Contracting and partners for hosting the forum and supporting contractors as they pursue work on Lathrop Homes!



O'Hare Aviation Forum Highlights Upcoming Opportunities at ORD

The Turner Paschen Aviation Partners (TPAP), a joint venture team led by Turner Construction and FH Paschen and including d'Escoto, Inc., GMA Construction, SPAAN Tech, and Brown & Momen, hosted an educational and networking session at Turner Construction's Chicago office in support of their work on the O'Hare 21 (ORD Next) project. HIRE360 brought members of its Business Development network to engage directly with project leaders.

Representatives from Vanderlande Industries Inc. and Daifuku Airport America Corporation shared insights into the installation of a new baggage handling system planned for concourse D, including project scope, timeline, and procurement processes. The session also gave contractors a clearer understanding of the scope of work, how to prepare for upcoming opportunities, and a chance to connect with decision-makers involved in this project.

Thank you to Turner Paschen Aviation Partners and Zola Stewart, Community and Citizenship Director at Turner Construction, for inviting HIRE360 and its network and for continuing to create opportunities connected to O'Hare's expansion! For more information on the project and upcoming bid opportunities, visit www.tpapord.com.



Our Mission is to Expand Employment Opportunities

Recruitment

Apprenticeship Openings

The following apprenticeship programs are **open now**:

Electrical

- [IBEW Local 134 \(Alsip\)](#)
- [IBEW Local 176 \(Joliet\)](#)
- [IBEW Local 701 \(Westchester \(Cook County - DuPage County\)\)](#)

Pipefitters

- [Pipefitters UA Local 597 \(Chicago - Cook County\)](#)
- [Sheet Metal Workers Locals 265 \(Downers Grove\)](#)

Iron and Structural

- [Iron Workers Locals 63 \(Chicagoland\), 444, and 498](#)

Concrete / Laborers

- [Cement Masons Local 502 \(Bellwood\)](#)
- [Chicagoland Laborers District Council](#)
- [Bricklayers District Council Training Center \(Addison - DuPage County\)](#)

Roofing / Finishing / Glass

- [Roofers Local 11 \(La Grange - Cook County\)](#)
- [Finishing Trades Institute DC14 \(Berkeley - Cook County\)](#)
- [Glaziers Union Local 27 \(Lyons\)](#)

Heavy Equipment

- [Operating Engineers Local 150 \(Wilmington - Will County\)](#)

Need Support? We're Here for You

If you need help preparing for an apprenticeship test, updating your resume, or requesting a recommendation letter, please contact your Candidate Support Advisor or HIRE360 at [\(312\) 575-2500](tel:(312)575-2500) or info@HIRE360Chicago.com.

Virtual Job Club

Job club happens every 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month, candidates can register here for the next job club. [Click here to register now!](#)

If you have any questions or would like more information about future Job Club sessions, feel free to reach out to your recruiter or case manager directly. You can also contact us at

Information Session

Riggers, Machinery Movers & Machinery Erectors Virtual Information Session

HIRE360 invites individuals interested in construction careers to attend a Riggers, Machinery Movers & Machinery Erectors Information Session. This virtual session is designed to introduce participants to the rigging and hoisting trades and help them determine whether this career pathway may be a good fit.

Participants will gain insight into what the work looks like on the job, how to enter the trade through a registered apprenticeship, and what to expect physically and professionally in this field.

Event Details

- Date: April 17
- Time: 10:00 AM
- Location: Zoom (Virtual)
- Audience: Individuals interested in construction trades and union apprenticeship pathways

Register [here](#) for the zoom link!



The poster for the Spring Citywide Career Fair features a blue and yellow color scheme. On the left, it lists the event details: 'SPRING CITYWIDE CAREER FAIR', 'Wednesday, April 22, 2026 10:00AM - 2:00PM', and the location 'Olive-Harvey College Main Building, 10001 S. Woodlawn Ave., Chicago, IL 60628'. It also includes instructions for employers to apply online and for attendees to pre-register. On the right, there is a photograph of people at a career fair. At the bottom, there is a QR code and a list of partner organizations including CTA, COPA, HIRE 360, MDCS, MOHRIS, and others.

Spring Citywide Career Fair

Looking for your next opportunity? Join the [Chicago City Clerk's Office Spring Citywide Career Fair](#) on Wednesday, April 22 from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM at [Olive-Harvey College](#). Connect with employers, explore open roles, and take the next step toward your career goals. Pre-registration is strongly encouraged. Secure your spot today and come prepared to make a strong impression.

We're grateful to the Chicago City Clerk's Office and partners, including [Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership](#), [City Colleges of Chicago](#), [Chicago Transit Authority](#), [Chicago Public Library](#), [Cara Collective](#), [National Able Network](#), and others for bringing this opportunity to job seekers across Chicago.

Youth Engagement



CPS Skilled Trades Fair Connects Students to Career Pathways

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) students are getting a firsthand look at careers in the trades through the CPS Skilled Trades Fair. Hosted at Plumbers Local 130 and the Mid-America Carpenters Regional Council's Chicago Training Center, the first two events brought students inside union training facilities for hands-on learning, panel discussions, and opportunities to sign up for apprenticeships and internships.

At the kickoff event at Local 130, three former CPS students who participated in the Bridge program returned as panelists, sharing their experiences with more than 400 students. They spoke about their current roles, career paths, and answered questions about what it's like to work in the trades.

HIRE360 connected directly with students throughout both events, sharing information on pathways into the trades and upcoming opportunities. Events like these help introduce students to what a career in construction looks like and how to take the first step. We're proud to partner with CPS, Plumbers Local 130, the Carpenter's Union, and industry leaders working to build the next generation of skilled professionals, with additional events planned this spring.

In The News

FEATURED STORY: Cara Siegel on Hire360 and Women in the Trades

HIRE360 was featured on the [America's Work Force Union Podcast](#), where Cara Siegel, and IBEW Local 601 journey person and instructor with the East Central Illinois Building and Construction Trades Council, shared insights on how HIRE360's Pre-Apprenticeship Programs are helping build a strong pipeline into the union trades across Illinois. The conversation highlighted how hands-on training and industry-aligned support are preparing individuals for careers in construction and clean energy. The episode explores the growing demand for skilled workers and the importance of supporting long-term success in the trades.



CARA SIEGEL ON HIRE360, CLEAN ENERGY JOBS AND TRADESWOMEN RETENTION

A new pre-apprenticeship pipeline in Illinois is giving workers a low-risk entry point into union construction careers tied to clean energy growth. On the first edition of Trades Day on the America's Work Force Union Podcast, [International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 601 Journey person and East Central Illinois Building and Construction Trades Council](#) Instructor Cara Siegel described how the [Hire360](#) model is building basic skills, confidence and real application momentum across multiple trades.

Francis Construction Builds Momentum Across Chicago

[Francis Construction](#), a Chicago-based, family-run contractor led by Steve and Christian Searles, is continuing to grow across major projects in the region. After connecting with HIRE360, the company secured its first major opportunity at the [National Public Housing Museum](#) in 2023, completing approximately \$2 million in work. That project helped establish their track record and opened the door to additional work, including the Arlington Heights Racetrack demolition. Since then, the company has grown from roughly \$3.5 million in revenue to a projected \$20 million, supported by access to project opportunities and working capital through partners like [Wintrust Bank](#) and [Allies for Community Business](#).



Today, Francis Construction is managing more than \$11 million in active projects, including the E.G. Woode Food Hub in Englewood, and has built a workforce of over 300 tradesmen across multiple job sites. The company has also hired [Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program](#) apprentices and continues to bring new workers into the trades while prioritizing local hiring and long-term career pathways. Their growth reflects what's possible when contractors have access to the right opportunities and resources to keep building.

HIRE360

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