



Industry Led. Community Focused.

JULY 2026 E-NEWSLETTER

HIRE360 Candidates Helped Build the Obama Presidential Center

Through the support of the [Obama Foundation](#), the WE CAN BUILD IT Partnership — [Chicago Women in Trades](#), HIRE360 Partners, [Revolution Workshop](#), and [St. Paul Church of God in Christ Community Development Ministries](#) — connected more than 220 individuals to union apprenticeships, the majority through HIRE360. HIRE360 also helped five contractors go union signatory to work on the Center and provided working capital loans to help many more contractors take part in the project. Congratulations to everyone who helped make this landmark a reality.



Chicagoland Workforce



Two Kane County Pre-Apprentices Turn Training into Union Careers

Two more graduates of HIRE360's first [Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship cohort in Kane County](#) have already launched their careers in the trades. Emarrion Pittman was one of the

program's most engaged students, actively pursuing employment from day one — and it paid off. He was the first in his cohort to land a job and enroll in an apprenticeship, joining [Ascher Brothers](#) and [Painters District Council No. 30](#) as a painter-decorator apprentice with the [North Central Illinois Finishing Trades Institute](#). Joshua Arreola also completed the program and has since been hired by [Paramount Painting](#). Congratulations to Emarrion and Joshua on taking the next step toward long-term careers in the trades!



Will County Celebrates Nearly 20 Illinois Works Graduates

When a few of your graduates are already working in the trades before graduation day, you know the program is working. Congratulations to the nearly 20 graduates of [HIRE360's Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program in Will County](#)!

Thank you to [Will County Executive Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant](#) for hosting, [Will & Grundy Counties Building Trades Councils](#) and [Pepper Construction](#) for leading apprenticeship tours, State Representative Larry Walsh, Jr. for his remarks and continued legislative support of workforce training programs, and the [Illinois AFL-CIO](#) for helping make it all happen.



HIRE360 Celebrates CISCO's Leadership Transition

On June 26, HIRE360 joined [CISCO](#)'s Breakfast Open House to celebrate the retirement of Executive Director Dan Allen and welcome Stephanie Kifowit as CISCO's new Executive Director. For 13 years, Dan has been a steady, generous leader in the construction industry — always willing to share his time, his knowledge, and his support with partners across the field. His impact on [CISCO](#) and the broader industry will be felt for years to come.

We're also excited to welcome Stephanie Kifowit as she steps into her new role. HIRE360 looks forward to continuing to build on the strong partnership Dan helped establish. Congratulations to Dan on a well-earned retirement, and welcome to Stephanie as she takes the helm!

Pictured left to right: Pastor Ford of [St. Paul Church of God In Christ](#), Dan Allen, Ana Maria Montes de Oca-Rojas, Dwayne Stewart of [Bricklayers District Council 1](#), and Michael Volpentesta, President of [Administrative District Council 1](#)



HIRE360's Mentoring Team Kicks Off Summer with Connection and Community

HIRE360 Chicago's Mentoring Team kicked off the summer with a simple principle: success in the trades isn't built alone. We brought candidates together for an evening of networking, encouragement, and good food. Apprentices and journey workers connected, talked through current projects, shared lessons learned on the job, and encouraged one another as they continue building their careers in the skilled trades.

Our Industry Representatives were also on hand, sharing what contractors across Chicagoland are looking for — giving participants valuable insight into current hiring needs and opportunities. Strong careers are built through strong relationships, and evenings like this are a reminder of how valuable that network can be.

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.](#)

Steven Gross Builds a New Future Through Climate Works

For HIRE360 Pre-Apprenticeship graduate Steven Gross, the path to success has been defined by resilience. Raised by his grandmother, Steven faced frequent moves and the loss of his grandmother as a teenager, navigating life largely on his own. As a young adult,

he served time in 2019 for possession of a controlled substance — but remained committed to building a better future.

That opportunity came through the HIRE360 Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program, delivered with the [East Central Illinois Building & Construction Trades Council](#). Steven gained hands-on skills, industry knowledge, and a strong support system — including stipends and barrier reduction funds that kept him focused, and lasting bonds with classmates. Today, Steven has graduated, earned his driver's license, bought a car, and secured an apprenticeship with [Ironworkers Local 380](#) in Urbana.



Reflecting on his journey, he offered this advice to others considering their future: "If you're deciding between the trades and college, I'd say go into the trades and keep college as a backup. If you're willing to put in the work, it's one of the most reliable paths to a solid career."



ECIBCTC Celebrates 21 Climate Works Graduates in Savoy

The [East Central Illinois Building & Construction Trades Council](#), in partnership with HIRE360's Climate Works CEJA Program, celebrated its Savoy graduating class, recognizing 21 pre-apprenticeship graduates at [Ironworkers Local 380](#) in Urbana.

State Senator Paul Faraci delivered the keynote, highlighting the impact of union apprenticeship pathways and the importance of expanding access to training. The celebration also welcomed [State Representative Brandun Schweizer](#), [Champaign Mayor Deborah Frank Feinen](#), members of the [Champaign City Council](#), and Roger Huebner of [Central Illinois Builders of AGC](#).



ECIBCTC Celebrates Largest Climate Works Graduating Class Yet in Danville

The [East Central Illinois Building & Construction Trades Council](#), in partnership with HIRE360's Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program, celebrated 18 pre-apprentices who completed the 13-week program in Danville — the program's largest graduating class to date.

Climate Works helps participants move from learning to earning by connecting them to registered union apprenticeships. Derek Wayne has been accepted into [Plumbers & Pipefitters Local 157](#), and Avery Hill into [Bricklayers Local 8](#) — both beginning their careers as union apprentices.

Thank you to [State Representative Brandun Schweizer](#) for commending the class's dedication and perseverance, and to [State Senator Paul Faraci](#) for his continued support. We also appreciate Danville mayoral candidate Tricia Teague and State Representative candidate Mary Catherine "Mary Kate" Roberson for attending.



HIRE360 Joins Rockford Partners for "Elevating Communities" CEJA Showcase

HIRE360 joined community partners in Rockford for Elevating Communities, an event showcasing the region's CEJA Workforce Programs and highlighting organizations expanding career pathways in clean energy and construction across northern Illinois.

Our Regional Program Manager Shateveon Goforth represented HIRE360 alongside partners from [DECO](#), [IEC](#), [Workforce Connection](#), [Goodwill](#), and others, sharing how the CEJA-funded Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program is connecting Rockford-area

residents to union careers in the trades. [Senator Dick Durbin](#) was also in attendance, lending his continued support to the region's workforce development efforts.

Thank you to [Think Big Corporation](#) for hosting, and to all the partners who continue to make this work possible. Together, we're building a skilled, diverse workforce — one community at a time.



Awaken Foundation's Jurea Crudup on Building Pathways with HIRE360

Jurea Crudup, Founder & Executive Director of [Awaken Foundation](#), has seen firsthand what the HIRE360 and Climate Works partnership makes possible. "The impact has been significant," she says. "Participants gain access to industry-recognized training, career exposure, and direct connections to employers and apprenticeship opportunities." Many, she notes, are now building sustainable careers they may not have otherwise had access to.

The partnership also strengthens Awaken Foundation's mission of economic mobility through workforce development. "While Awaken focuses on preparing individuals for success, HIRE360 helps bridge the gap between training and careers," Crudup explains. "Together, we're creating a stronger workforce ecosystem."

Looking ahead, Crudup is excited to keep expanding that impact: "By combining our strengths, we are creating life-changing opportunities for individuals and families across our region."

Business & Supply Chain



Illinois Tollway Connects Businesses to Contracting Opportunities

The [Illinois Tollway's](#) "Contracting with Government" event brought together public agencies, prime vendors, and emerging businesses to expand access to public-sector contracting opportunities including the Tollway's 15-year, \$26.5 billion "Driving Connections" capital program improving roads and bridges across northern Illinois through 2042. State Rep. Will Davis joined procurement leaders from the Illinois Tollway, [CTA](#), [Cook County](#), and the [City of Chicago](#), to discuss certification requirements, procurement systems, and vendor relationships.

HIRE360 Business Development Manager Dave Thomas met one-on-one with clients, providing guidance on procurement portals, capability statements, bonding, pricing, and certification pathways as they prepare to pursue future public projects. Thank you to the Illinois Tollway and all of the participating partners for creating opportunities that reduce barriers for businesses new to public procurement.

Casino Summit Highlights Industry Opportunities

HIRE360 joined the "High Stakes, High Impact" Casino Summit, co-hosted by [Wind Creek Casino](#) and the [Chicago Minority Supplier Development Council](#), bringing local contractors, suppliers, and service firms together with buyers from [Ameristar](#), [Bally's](#), [Four Winds](#), [Hard Rock](#), [Harrah's](#), [Hollywood Casino](#), [Penn Entertainment](#), and [Rivers Casino](#).

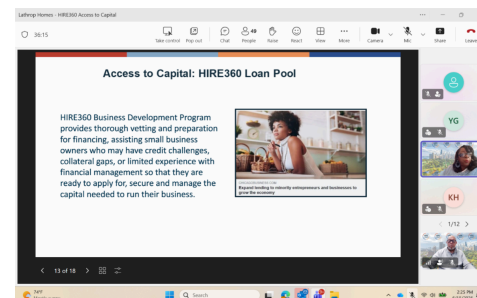
Throughout the event, Business Development and Supply Chain Manager Dave Thomas introduced HIRE360 clients directly to casino buyers. Adrian Mobley, President of [A&W Contractors](#), connected with representatives from [Ezzy Manufacturing](#), [Taza Construction](#), Ameristar, and Penn Entertainment.



Sessions also covered certifications, insurance, compliance, and capital needs to help businesses prepare for future opportunities. Thank you to Wind Creek Casino, the Chicago Minority Supplier Development Council, and all the participating partners for creating valuable networking opportunities for local businesses.

Lathrop Webinar Expands Capital Access

Contractors interested in opportunities at the [Lathrop](#) redevelopment recently joined HIRE360 and [Related Midwest](#) for an Access to Capital webinar focused on preparing businesses for the project's next phase. Led by HIRE360 Director of Business Development Deborah Whitaker and Related Midwest Vice President of Construction Yanet Garcia, the session covered financing, business planning, bonding, and other tools to help contractors compete for larger projects.



Participants also learned about working capital, technical assistance, mentorship, and bonding support available through HIRE360. As Lathrop Homes advances into its next phase, several participating businesses have already submitted loan applications. Thank you to Related Midwest for partnering with HIRE360 to connect local contractors with future opportunities at Lathrop Homes.

Youth Engagement



Chicago Teens Dive Into Construction and Environmental Careers This Summer

This summer, HIRE360 welcomed Chicago teens ages 16–18 into "Next Builders: Intro to Construction," a six-week program that kicked off June 22 in partnership with [After School Matters](#), [Related Midwest](#), and [Related Affordable Foundation](#) — with a stipend of up to \$850. Students got the opportunity to tour a data center construction site with [Power Construction](#).

Alongside the construction curriculum, participants are taking part in [Greencorps Chicago's](#) Youth Program, joining hands-on workshops exploring environmental careers, community greening projects, outdoor recreation, and bike safety — each participant taking home a free bike to keep. They recently installed garden beds at a vacant lot in Bronzeville as part of hands-on environmental career exposure.

In The News

Featured Story— Commentary: Build a strong local safety net that can help Chicago small contractors get bigger

This month, HIRE360 was featured in a [Crain's Chicago Business](#) commentary on building a stronger local safety net to help Chicago's small contractors grow. The op-ed comes from Steve Searles and Francis Construction Group, a Chicago-based, HIRE360-supported contracting firm, and argues that federal contracting opportunities alone aren't what grows a small construction business — durable local infrastructure is.

[Read more here.](#)

CRAIN'S CHICAGO BUSINESS

A CRAIN FAMILY BRAND

Politics & Policy Residential Real Estate Health Care Banking & Finance

ELEVATE

Commentary: Build a strong local safety net that can help Chicago small contractors get bigger



Steve Searles is CEO of Francis Construction, a Chicago-based, family-owned construction company.

But I've learned something in my 40-plus years in the industry that gives me a different perspective on what I'm hearing in most of the news about the end of federal programs for disadvantaged businesses. Federal contracts didn't build our company — we built it, through grit, long hours, and a network of local programs created to help newcomers get in this field and actually succeed once they're in. That's why this moment shouldn't be a call to mourn a fading program — it should be a call to protect the local ones that are working and to create more of them.

I know this because I've lived every part of it. I started as a union carpenter apprentice through a special program designed to help young African American students from Chicago gain access to Washburn Trade School. That opportunity changed my

HIRE360 also appeared in the news:

[Noticias Univision Chicago 5pm \(WGBO-TV\)](#) | WGBO-TV

[**HIRE360 Celebrate First Kane County Cohort to Graduate Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program**](#) | Plumbing & Mechanical Magazine

[**From fast food to carpenter: Joliet woman credits workforce program with building her career in the trades**](#) | Shaw Local News

[**How a Pre-Apprenticeship Pipeline Delivers Roofing Recruits**](#) | Roofing Contractor

Business Spotlight

Urban Roots Inc.



Founded in 2008 by Jimmie and Tiffany Williams, [Urban Roots Inc.](#) has grown from a two-client startup into a commercial landscaping and snow removal company serving projects across Chicago, including the Obama Presidential Center and Mahalia Jackson Court Redevelopment.

Working with HIRE360, the company strengthened its business through capital access, certification updates, prime contractor connections, and union signatory support. Urban Roots also creates employment opportunities for returning citizens and volunteers with Chicago Public Schools and the Cook County Department of Corrections.

Today, Urban Roots is MBE, BEP, SBI, and Section 3 certified, signatory to Local 150, and the recipient of the Chicago Urban League's 2023 Excellence in Business Award.

To learn more about Urban Roots Inc., contact them at jimmie@urbanrootsinc.com or [\(773\) 952-6842](tel:773.952.6842)



Our Mission is to Expand Employment Opportunities

Recruitment

Apprenticeship Openings

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

Electrical

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

Pipefitters

- [UA Pipefitters Local 597 \(Cook County – Chicago\)](#).

Sheet Metal

- [Sheet Metal Workers Local 265](#)

Iron and Structural

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

Concrete and Laborers

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

Roofing, Finishing, and Glass

- [Roofers Local 11 \(Cook County – La Grange\)](#).
- [Finishing Trades Institute – DC 14 \(Cook County – Berkeley\)](#).
- [Glaziers Local 27 \(Cook County – Lyons\)](#).

Heavy Equipment

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

Need Help Applying?

Our team is here to support you with apprenticeship test preparation, resume updates, recommendation letters, and understanding application requirements.

Contact your Candidate Support Advisor (formerly Case Manager):

- Phone: [\(312\) 575-2500](tel:(312)575-2500)
- Email: info@HIRE360Chicago.com

If you are serious about building a career, not just finding a job, now is the time to apply! We are proud to support pathways into union, family-sustaining careers.

HIRE360

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