

My City



A Bright Future Under Construction

Marlo Jackson, born and raised in Providence, is one of many residents looking to provide his kids with a better life. He dreams of a home that he can build and repair on his own for his family. Realizing that he needs a solid, good-paying career to meet those goals, Jackson enrolled in the Building Futures program. Jackson is one of the thirty residents of the city who went through rigorous training and was placed in construction apprenticeships with Building Futures. He is also one of the seven of that

group that is now hard at work constructing Brown University's new medical school downtown. City News caught up with Jackson to talk shop and to find out what it takes to build a bright future for oneself.

What was life like for you before you joined the Building Futures program?

I was involved in the Amos House Carpentry Training Program which was an unpaid 13-week program where we were taught about carpentry work. We were taught a core curriculum and learned the basic skills of carpentry like how to handle power tools and hand tools. After I graduated in 2008, I worked at Amos House for a short time. It was then that I got referred to Building Futures. I went to their orientation and I received more training from them and eventually graduated from Building Futures in 2009. This year, 2010, I started apprenticing in construction.

What are the skills that Building Futures helped you develop? Describe the training process to get you ready for a job in construction.

They taught me how to construct the framework for partitions, which is basically a wall. They taught me how to mix and lay cement through concrete forms. I learned to put up a door, install tile floors, do wiring for data connection, and also electrical work like working with conduit pipes.



I learned so much. It was very helpful. The training that I received from Building Futures is what will allow me to earn more later on.

Describe what it feels like to be part of the construction team that's building the new Warren Alpert Medical School on Richmond Street.

It feels great! This is something that I always wanted to do as a little kid. I always wanted to be a part of something big and here I am. We have a great team. Sarra Engineering is a great company to work for. They took me in and showed me the ropes and how things get

done. They have a lot of patience with me. I just want to get the basics down pat and hopefully that experience will allow me to be even better at what I do.



As a native of Providence and a resident of the city, how do you think a program like Building Futures impacts the city as a whole?

It's a program that changes people's direction in life. I think people will want to get involved in a program like this for different reasons. But for those who want to do it so they can prosper and succeed in life and have a good career, it's a great program to get started. It's not the kind of program that gives you direction and

then leaves you on your own. They expose you to the field and they follow up with you. If they don't hear from for awhile, they will call you and see if everything is alright, if you're okay, and if there's anything you need. There aren't many programs that do that.

What are your hopes/aspirations for the future?

I want to work in construction. I want to complete my apprenticeship program, move on to become a journeyman, and eventually become a foreman down the line. Personally, I'd love to own a house someday, do all the repairs on my own and give my kids something to look forward to. They're still going to have to work hard someday, too, but I hope that I can give them a life where they don't have to work as hard as I've had to succeed.

Your mom was at the Mayor's Operation Opportunity press conference this week to cheer you on. What did she say to you afterwards?

She told me that she loved me and that she's proud of me – all the things that mothers tell their children when you put a smile on their face and not out walking around the streets getting in trouble. She's genuinely happy for me.



Any words of encouragement for that "next crop" of Building Futures apprentices?

Stick with it. This is a program that demands a real commitment from you. It is not something to take lightly. They really determine whether you want this career or not. The training is rigorous. You have to get up early, work and train long days. If you're not ready for it, don't get involved with it. If you are ready to step up, Building Futures is the perfect place to train your body, your mind, and get you ready to succeed in life.

For more about Building Futures, visit <http://www.bfri.org/>