

BUILDING Strong Communities

Building Strong Communities Newsletter

Aligning stakeholders to provide industry-driven, apprenticeship-readiness pathways into union construction careers.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Welcome to the inaugural edition of the Building Strong Communities Newsletter! We are excited to share the latest updates and successes of our community-driven initiatives. As we embark on this journey of quarterly updates, we look forward to keeping you informed about the impactful work being done within [Building Strong Communities](#).

Building Strong Communities is a Minnesota nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering individuals and revitalizing communities through careers in the skilled building and construction trades. Our mission is to provide access to careers in the building and construction trades. We conduct a 12-week, multi-trade apprenticeship preparatory program that focuses on preparing women, people of color, and veterans for a career in the construction industry.

The goal is for every BSC participant to complete our program, become a registered apprentice, and begin their career in an occupation they are excited about. This achievement not only demonstrates the effectiveness of our approach but also highlights the demand for skilled individuals in the workforce. We want to thank Minnesota Building and Construction Trades Affiliates and the Fair Contracting Foundation who provide funding and other supports; Building and Construction Trades registered apprenticeship programs; signatory contractors who hire our participants, support mock interviews, site tours; and all other stakeholders who play a part in the success of the organization and the participants.

At BSC, we are always on the lookout for individuals interested in pursuing a career in building and construction trades or those seeking a career change. If you or someone you know is interested in a career in the trades, visit www.buildingstrong.org to learn more about our apprenticeship preparatory program and how you can be a part of our community.

To all of our partners, thank you for being a crucial part of our journey towards creating stronger communities through education and empowerment. We look forward to sharing more success stories, updates, and opportunities with you in the coming newsletters.

-Rick Martagon, Executive Director, Building Strong Communities



BSC By the Numbers:

- 107 placements over 2 years
- Continuous recruitment for 21 different trades
- Graduated the largest cohort in the program's history in 2024



MEET THE GRADUATES

Christopher VonVille was successfully recovering from addiction when he and his wife discovered Soar Career Solutions where they attended career workshops and training. “They connected me with Building Strong Communities,” said Christopher. “My struggles with addiction were a reason for my getting into the program,” he added. [Click here to read more.](#)



Amber Patino-Linley was looking for a career change when she started searching online for skilled trade positions. Amber was working as a delivery driver at the time and came across the Building Strong Communities website in November of 2023. She filled out an application and soon received an email followed by a 10-minute phone interview and she was accepted into the program.

[Click here to read more:](#)

“Construction work was calling me,” said Dorlisa Flournoy. She was working for a temp agency in the medical device field when an online search brought her to Building Strong Communities in early 2024. Her passion was always in the construction field. Now, five months after that initial contact, Dorlisa is an operating engineer working with heavy equipment.

[Click to read more:](#)



“This program changes lives. It gives people the education and skills to make informed career choices that will benefit themselves and their families.”

Unique aspects of BSC include:

-Rick Martagon,
Executive Director of Building
Strong Communities.



- BSC is a 501C3 focused on helping women, people of color, and veterans enter the trades, addressing workforce shortages while promoting diversity and inclusion within the industry.
- The programs include apprenticeships, mentorship opportunities, and support services that help participants overcome barriers to success.
- By fostering partnerships with schools, businesses, unions, community organizations, and state and local governments, BSC creates pathways to employment and career advancement.
- Unlike programs that focus on a single construction trade, BSC offers exploration and education across 21 different trades - this approach helps participants discover the trade best matched their skills, abilities and interest.

COMPANY SHOWCASE-AMES CONSTRUCTION

Ames Construction's journey with the Building Strong Communities (BSC) program began in September 2019, when Jenny Winkelaar extended an invitation to attend an introductory meeting. Intrigued by the program's potential, Ames decided to explore further.

[Click to read more:](#)



Ames Construction

GRADUATION HIGHLIGHTS

On May 3, 2024 Building Strong Communities graduated the program's largest class ever. Held at North Hennepin Community College, this achievement highlighted the collaborative efforts of various entities and partners. This record-breaking graduation was a testament to the dedication and hard work of all those involved in the Building Strong Communities program, promising a brighter future for its graduates and the industries they will soon join.

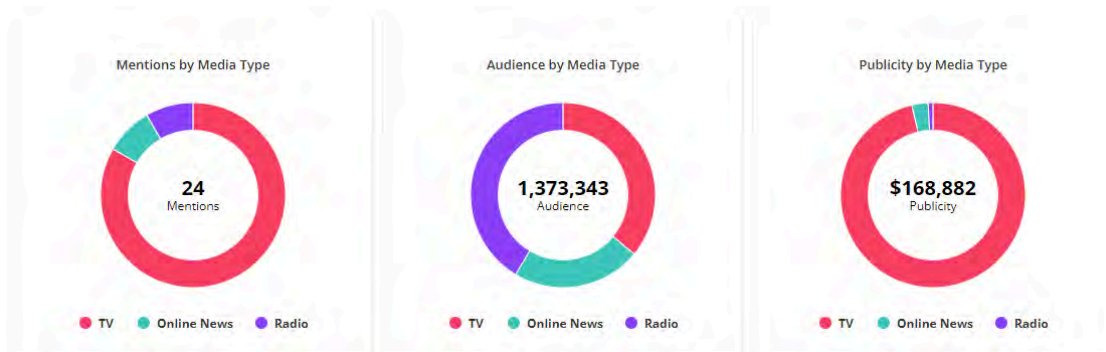
Community-based organizations played a vital role in this program through recruitment, workforce readiness, and providing supportive services. This network included Avivo, Career Solutions, Central Minnesota Jobs and Training, EMERGE Community Development, Native Sun Community Power Development, Summit Academy OIC, Twin Cities Rise, and SOAR Careers. These unique partnerships brought together key stakeholders to prepare individuals for promising careers in energy and construction trades.



With a mix of virtual and hands-on classes, BSC students gain insights into various trades and receive interview training.

The goal of BSC is for every student to receive a job offer after graduation!

Building Strong Communities, in Partnership with SnowGlobe Public Relations, garnered incredible media coverage of our May graduation, resulting in 24 stories and an audience of 1.3 million viewers.



“THANK YOU” TO OUR BSC SUPPORTERS!



LiUNA! MINNESOTA & NORTH DAKOTA
Feel the Power



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