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# Making the Transition From Casino Worker to Construction Journeyman

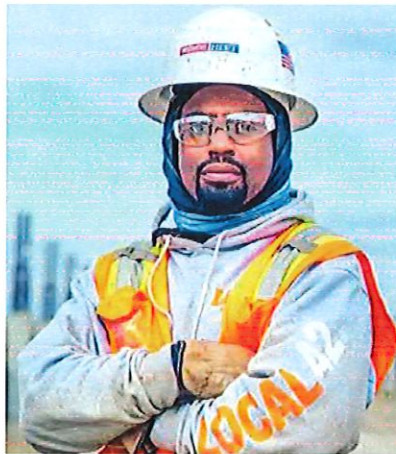
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Kevon White had three good reasons in 2015 to quit his job as a casino worker to become a construction worker – he had just been told he was going to be the father of triplets!

"I already had one child and was excited about having another. Finding out that we were having triplets was a shock and I began to worry about how I was going to take care of all these babies," said Kevon.

"For example, you can't just ask a friend to borrow their old stroller because you have to special order a triplets stroller that costs \$1,400, and you can't just put a car seat in the back of your car because you need a car that is big enough to fit three car seats."



Kevon grew up in Madison, Illinois. He graduated in 2007 from Collinsville High School, where he was a good student. Although he had enjoyed taking some electrical classes his senior year, he had no interest in becoming an electrician or going to college. With no friends or relatives working in construction, that field never even crossed his mind.

Instead, he just wanted to get a job to support himself. Being a casino worker seemed to fit the bill. Having a regular job allowed him to make ends meet, although sometimes barely. But with fatherhood for triplets looming,

Kevon realized he needed a job where he could make more money and have more opportunities.

He started looking into getting a second job until one of his friends suggested he check out McCarthy Building Companies because they were hiring yard workers. He followed his friend's suggestion and applied for a job. Kevon was admitted to McCarthy Trade Internship Program, which is designed to provide individuals have little or no construction experience the opportunity to become exposed to the basic components of working in construction. The program provides a hands-on experience, working in the company's St. Louis yard side-by-side with experienced McCarthy tradesmen.

Over the course of the program, candidates have the opportunity to experience what it takes to be successful, get experience using the basic tools of the trade and gain a basic knowledge of construction.

Those who are successful are provided the opportunity to become a Union apprentice, begin the Union-provided Apprentice Training, and ultimately, have a path to start a successful career in the construction trades.

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Kevon began working for McCarthy on April 13, 2015. He says he remembers the date specifically because it changed his life. Within 13 months he went from being a yard worker to an apprentice laborer and 18 months after that to journeyman.

Along the way, he discovered a career that gave him a sense of purpose, helped him learn to become a better communicator, enabled him to feel like a valued member of team where his opinions matter, and provided him with a comfortable income to afford to buy a good house for his family and drive a reliable vehicle.

"Kevon's story exemplifies what STL.Works is all about," said Art McCoy, who leads the Regional Business Council's workforce development program created in partnership with St. Louis Civic Pride Foundation to connect job seekers with positions that don't require college degrees, but some level of training.

"STL.Works embraces the idea that there are pathways and resources to well-paying jobs in construction, as well as technology, healthcare and manufacturing, that can give people like Kevon a way to gain the skills they need, get the job they want and the future they deserve," said McCoy.

"Working in construction and specifically for McCarthy has given me the opportunity to work for a great company that cares about me, my safety and my future," said Kevon. "When I am on a job, I know someone always has 'my back' when it comes to safety because we are taught from day one to watch out for each other constantly, every day and all the time. And McCarthy also works with me so that I have the time I need to take time off from work to attend classes I need to keep advancing."

Kevon has worked on several projects for McCarthy, including the renovation of Macelwane Hall and other projects for St. Louis University, the St. Louis Aquarium at Union Station, and currently for Next NGA West.

In describing a typical day, he says every day is different just like the weather.

"Somedays are so busy I grab a fast lunch and work overtime; other days are pretty routine with concrete pours and working with rebar. The variety keeps it interesting," he added.

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