

A Summer of New Professional Experiences **Learning About Career Possibilities**

Thanks to a special five-week summer program led by Iowa Labor Education Training Fund Instructor Dan Ness, high school students and young adults in the Cedar Rapids area have an opportunity to test drive a career in the trades.

In addition to classroom instruction and group discussion, the students try out a variety of tools, gain a small glimpse into the work life of construction site laborers and learn about possibilities for future career progression.

Those who like what they see can apply for apprenticeships to earn while they continue to learn and, once fully trained, could land a starting wage of more than \$40,000 per year.



Dan Ness has made a good life working in the trades. It's knowledge he passes on to the next generation as a training instructor with Iowa Labor Education Training Fund. It's also one of many possibilities presented to young people enrolled in Goodwill of the Heartlands' expanded youth career exploration program.

"I ask young people if they'd rather start out their career with \$40,000 in debt or making \$40,000 a year," Ness said, discussing the time and cost discrepancies between pursuing higher education or learning a trade.

"What many young people don't realize is where they begin isn't necessarily where they will wind up. There are opportunities throughout your career to specialize or advance into new roles."

Summer exploration classes are held at Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA) Local #43 in Cedar Rapids and provide foundational skills. Ness began the program three years ago and recently partnered with Goodwill of the Heartland to teach basic site safety, proper use of personal protective equipment and construction math and measuring. Learners gain hands on experience by completing projects Ness has prepared for them.

At the end of the summer program, learners can decide if they want to pursue an apprenticeship. For those who decide to take another step, the summer work contributes training credits toward their goal.

Exploring a Wealth of Options

Goodwill of the Heartland utilizes a General Motors Skilled Trades Grant to facilitate such career exploration and foundational skill development. In addition to traditional instruction, a portion of the grant funds personal protective equipment for learners, including steel toe boots and hard hats.

Goodwill Youth Career Navigators, also supported by the grant, provide added insight into a variety of skilled trades through job shadows. Heavy equipment operation, carpentry, electrical, masonry, plumbing, manufacturing and more can be part of the process.

Employment-related workshops are provided by Youth Career Navigators at the end of each class. These offer career planning and support for entering apprenticeships, trade programs at community colleges, or community-based employment.

