

# THE DAILY REPORTER

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## It all begins with labor

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Learning the construction business through the building trades is a progressive process: You don't always start at the top. The laborer craft is a great way to enter the construction trades, work on a variety of projects and gain a wide range of skills. The laborer craft:

- Teaches you the basics while working and learning on the job.
- Provides an understanding of the necessary skills for other trades.
- Allows you to work side by side with other craft workers.
- Creates a highly knowledgeable, well-rounded craft person.
- Allows you to take the lead on the project and impact its overall success.
- Leads to a fulfilling career. You can work your way up to foreman status in any number of specialties within the craft.

One of the strengths of the Laborer's Union #113 is its diversity, of which we are proud. Our member base includes:

- 300 blacks
- 210 Hispanics
- Four American Indians
- 72 women

Of the total number of minority members, 200 qualify for the Residence Preference Program.

We believe diversity brings strength to our membership and to the community. We work with employers daily to help them meet their work force demands. The Laborer's union is promoting diversity in our group:

- The Wisconsin Laborers District Council meets with contractors on a regular basis to discuss apprenticeship programs.
- To help eliminate language barriers for our Spanish-speaking members, we recently hired a full-time employee and are in the process of hiring a full-time dispatcher who are both fluent in Spanish.
- We recently hired an instructor to teach English to non-native workers.
- We translated various training materials into Spanish.
- We regularly send our Spanish-speaking members to a specialized instructor to help their understanding of safety certifications.

We are also planning for the future. Currently in the Laborer Craft Apprenticeship Program there are 140 total candidates, and of that number, 102 are minority candidates, 14 are female and 13 went through the BIG STEP pre-apprenticeship training program. We are very proud of our members and involvement with programs such as BIG STEP.

All of us in the industry need to encourage contractor support of the apprenticeship programs because it's the future work force of our industry. We can only hope that as the local economy expands, the door will open wide enough for all of our candidates in our shared, diverse future.

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