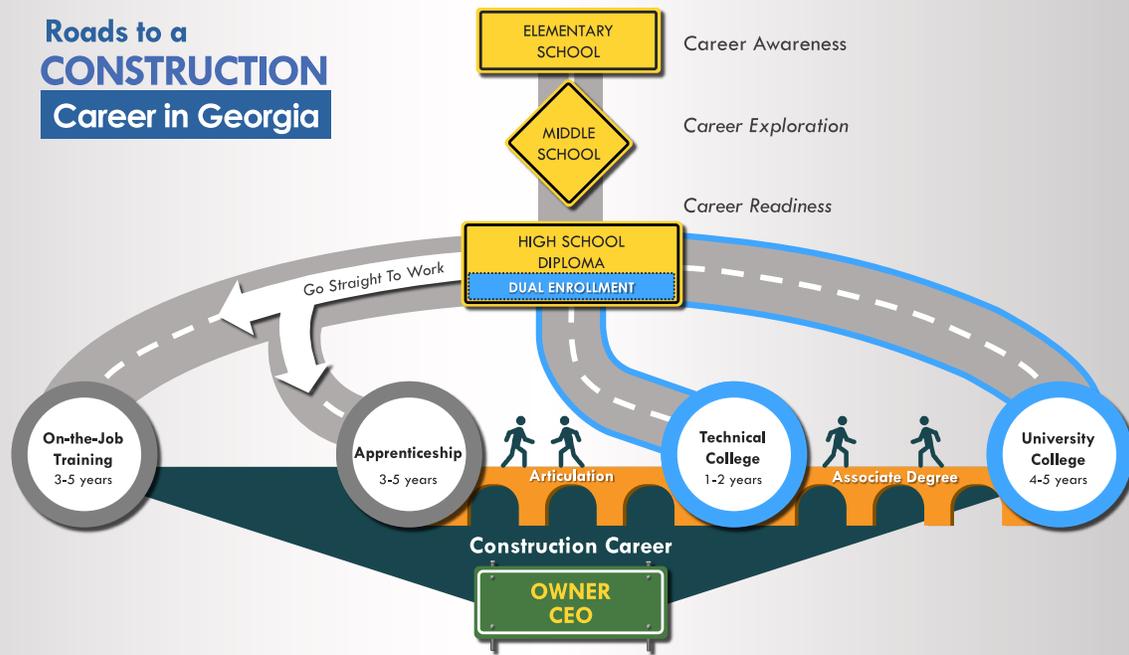


# WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

## Trade Talks: Teaching Counselors About Construction Industry Career Paths

*Middle and High School Counselors Gain an Appreciation of the Trades*



**A**GC Georgia teamed up with CEFGA, the Georgia Department of Education and several trade associations in January to host an informational session for more than 150 middle and high school counselors. This is the third consecutive year these groups have met in an effort to help educate counselors on construction career paths. *(Continued on Page 6)*

▲ *This image was part of the presentation to counselors and shows the many paths to enter today's construction industry. If you are open to talking with your local school system, we can provide you this information, along with numerous other resources we have to share. For more information, please reach out to Liz Campbell with AGC Georgia at [campbell@agcga.org](mailto:campbell@agcga.org).*

### IN THIS ISSUE

- Skills Challenge 2020
- Central Georgia Apprenticeship Program
- Material donations to construction classrooms
- CEFGA CareerExpo
- AGC Georgia Foundation contributions to schools

# Skills Challenge 2020: Building on Success, Again

*Savannah is the latest market added to the statewide series*

**A**GC Georgia is excited to announce the expansion of the annual Skills Challenge series. Regional champions are making plans to host the first student competitions in Southeast Georgia this fall. With Northwest Georgia hosting its inaugural competition in 2019 and an event planned for Savannah for 2020, we are working a long-term plan to make these events more accessible to as many students as possible across Georgia.

Along with increasing the number of competitions, the Skills Challenge events continue to grow exponentially each year with a record number of schools and participants in the existing markets.

We are also thrilled to see an increase in sponsorship support from the industry.

"I'm proud of the Skills Challenges' support and growth year-over-year," said Mike Dunham, CEO of AGC Georgia. "The connections we're making with these students will positively impact our industry for years to come."

Together with our regional contractors who provide the invaluable time commitment and resources to host each event, AGC Georgia asks all members to sponsor the series, consider having experts in various trades on your team volunteer to judge competitions, and host hands-on exhibits at each event to engage

with student observers who attend.

Please visit [www.agcga.org/skills](http://www.agcga.org/skills) to learn more about how you can get involved in making a difference in these students lives and impacting the overall construction industry.



## The dates and markets for 2020 include:

- Tuesday, October 27 – Macon
- Thursday, October 29 – Gainesville
- Thursday, November 5 – Cedartown
- Tuesday, November 10 – Moultrie
- Tuesday, November 17 – Savannah
- Thursday, December 3 – Augusta

## Central Georgia Technical College and MetroPower Form Apprenticeship Program

**L**eadership from Central Georgia Technical College (CGTC) and MetroPower signed an agreement providing access for apprentices to gain college credit under the company's registered electrical apprenticeship program.

The diploma program provides instruction in the inspection, maintenance, installation, and repair of electrical systems in residential, commercial, and industrial environments. Forty-four credit hours are needed for completion.

"It is really nice to have an industry partner that is forward-leaning," said Michael Engel, dean of Aerospace, Trade and Industry at CGTC. "MetroPower's willingness to pursue this agreement and to see it through today is greatly appreciated."

Engel (left) signed the agreement alongside CGTC Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Amy Holloway (middle) and MetroPower's Apprenticeship Program Manager Jessica Miller (right).

"The program's goal is to produce highly-skilled workers to meet the workforce demand," said Miller. "This unique, flexible system combines job-related technical instruction with structured on-the-job learning experiences. This program has

brought qualified applicants into the company."

Apprentices can earn college credit that can be applied toward the attainment of an Electrical Systems Construction & Maintenance diploma and a Certificate of Completion from the Georgia Department of Labor.



## Small Donations Mean A LOT!

**“Thank you to George F. Richardson for donating metal studs to my class. With SkillsUSA State competitions coming up, this will be a tremendous help to students wanting to practice for their competitions! Like my students in carpentry and industrial drywall competitions, my metals students can now practice with the actual material they will be using during competition. This real-life experience also prepares my students to take on internships and other job opportunities in the industry. Again, thank you for the metal studs and all you do for the future workforce.”**

*Excerpt from email on February 20, 2020 from Ben Lowe, Construction Instructor/SkillsUSA Advisor for Jackson High School in the Butts County School District to Joe Tuggle with Swofford Construction, the firm that arranged to have the studs delivered to the school.*



## Sovereign Construction Hosts Students



*Sovereign Construction President Dr. Michael Hatcher hosted 10 future leaders from Creekside High School at his office. The evening was built as a “Construction Careers & Entrepreneurship” event, where the focus was to expose the students to the construction industry, as well as to discuss career goals, life and entrepreneurship.*

# Helping Construction Program at Henry County Academy for Advanced Studies

**A**fter learning leaders at the Henry County Academy for Advanced Studies were having a hard time funding purchases of materials for their construction programs, several industry representatives jumped in to help.

In late February, the following representatives met to discuss solutions – Dr. Blackwell, CEO/Principal; Bill Chambless, AGC Georgia; David Hughes, Assistant Principal; Doug Lee, Constructor Teacher; Joe Tuggle, Swofford Construction; and Matthew White, CEFGA. Administration was extremely impressed with all the resources available through industry and understands how important it is for the program to stay funded.

At the time of the meeting, Doug Lee was beginning his work to get the program certified by NCCER, so he could teach the nationally recognized curriculum. He shared that his initial work had stalled due to lack of funding. Joe Tuggle, a member of the schools CTAE Advisory Board, assured the school that the industry would take care of the fees for certification and CEFGA is also going to help throughout the process.

To address some immediate needs, Swofford Construction, Inc. generously donated construction materials to the school. Doug Lee and Stephen Sanders, the welding teacher, received lumber and steel to keep their lab projects moving forward. The metals students built a trailer from the scrap steel donation.



# Sheridan Construction, Swofford Construction Present Donation Checks

**S**heridan Construction and Swofford Construction, Inc. partnered with the Central Georgia/Southern Crescent Workforce Development Alliance in conjunction with the Associated General Contractors of Georgia to support the development of the construction industry workforce. The construction firms visited area high school construction programs and presented them with funding to bolster their efforts to purchase needed materials or offset student costs for attending the SkillsUSA Competition.

*Pictured are presentations to the construction programs at (clockwise from top left) Harris County High School, Mary Persons High School, Jackson High School and Griffin High School. These contributions are made possible through the generous support of the October 2019 Central Georgia/Southern Crescent Skills Challenge sponsors.*



## Providing a Career Path for HCHS Graduates

**M**etroPower is providing graduating high school students who do not wish to attend college a valuable opportunity to pave their own career path in construction.

“We are looking to work smarter with our area partners to address the labor shortage,” said Jessica Miller, Apprenticeship Program Manager at MetroPower. “It’s our goal to help them understand that college isn’t their only option and that they can make a good living in other fields, such as being an electrician.”



The firm hosted Harris County High School (HCHS) students at its Columbus location. The local managers invited teacher Jim Steele’s construction class to attend one of the firm’s Conduit Bending classes that are held primarily for apprentices. Approximately 25 students spent the morning learning about EMT basic bends, smart bends, and how to use a hydraulic bender. Following the



group’s lunch, students learned about MetroPower’s apprenticeship program.

At Early County High School, the firm replaced light fixtures in the construction lab and worked with students regarding proper gear and handling equipment such as scaffolding and scissor lifts. The firm works closely with the school year-round.

The company has discovered that these types of programs are generating interest from the students and they plan to hire a few new apprentices upon graduation this spring. In fact, their apprentice program has grown from 111 to 176 in just the past year.

# TRADE TALKS

CONTINUED FROM COVER

This year's session of AGC Georgia and CEFGA hosted the largest attendance to date.

Held at Finishing Trades Institute in Decatur, the meeting focused on bringing the construction industry to the counselor in the same manner as representatives from colleges and universities.

The Participating counselors included:

- **Charlene Fletcher, Rockdale Career Academy from Rockdale County Schools**
- **Tony Jones, Crawford Williamson Long Middle School within Atlanta Public Schools**
- **Jackie Sullivan, Hillgrove High School within the Cobb County School District**

The program featured an open discussion with a panel of counselors who spoke about how the Trade Talks series has been a great resource. Then, attendees took an interactive tour of the host facility. This provided an experience for counselors to get a first-hand understanding of how valuable a specific trade is to a completed construction project. It also provided those in the education arena a glimpse into the training needed to begin a career in the field.

One counselor raved about the event saying, "Today was absolutely wonderful! It always helps me be a better counselor

when I can see and witness different careers. Trade Talks gives us this opportunity with the construction industry. When it's real for me, it's easier to conceptualize how to create interest and programming to deliver to students."

## TAKEAWAY TIP:

It's important for industry professionals to get involved with their local school system. Consider volunteering to speak with students on career days or introduce yourself as a resource to the middle school and high school counselors. Make a concerted effort to be a partner with the instructor and students enrolled in the local construction program. Industry representatives are in the best position to offer firsthand advice and guidance to all teachers about how the construction industry needs people who are in a variety of careers. Consider informing all education stakeholders that construction is a great place to start a rewarding career for students who want to go straight in the workforce upon graduation, students who want to enter an apprenticeship program or technical college and students who want to attend a traditional four-year college or university.

*Attendees took an interactive tour of the host facility. This provided an experience for counselors to get a first-hand understanding of how valuable a specific trade is to a completed construction project.*



# CEFGA CareerExpo Introduced Thousands Of Students to the Skilled Trades

**W**hile the 2020 CareerExpo and SkillsUSA Championships were cut short due to the COVID-19 pandemic, CEFGA made tremendous progress in introducing middle school, high school and college students to the skilled trades. The event's move to the GWCC, the third-largest convention space in the United States, was necessitated by having outgrown its previous home at the Georgia International Convention Center in College Park.

"Overall, I've seen a mindset change toward the positive for our industry," said Rod Owen, President of Jonesboro's C.C. Owen Tile Company and a participant in the K12 World of Interviews. "I've started to see a difference ... [especially with] teachers and counselors being a lot more open to the trades as a career."

Those teachers and counselors and other leaders certainly play a key role in helping students consider construction as a career option. And for their part,

graduates right out of high school, including apprenticeship programs and other paid on-the-job training.

"Our initiative for workforce development is to educate people that construction is a very lucrative industry," said Sandy Swanson, Manager of Human Resources for Holder Construction Company, "and that while having a degree for some people is great, that you don't always need a degree to be successful."



Despite the CareerExpo's abbreviated hours this year, plenty of students still had the opportunity to explore the 16 Worlds and interact with a variety of employers. As Holder's Swanson noted, it's all about those one-on-one conversations that might plant a seed in a student's mind – "You never know who you're going to touch," she said.

Added Owen: "I think we're making a difference. You're not going to change the mindset or culture over one event or one year; it's going to take time to swing that pendulum, but I think we're seeing that swing. If at any time someone is going to jump on board and be part of this, I think now is the time."

"While we were devastated by the decision we had to make to cancel [the last day of the event], we were thankful for the opportunity to see our new space in action," said CEFGA President & CEO Scott Shelar. "Our sponsors, exhibitors, staff and volunteers stepped up to meet the challenge of creating the biggest and best CareerExpo ever. And our school leaders, teachers and students showed up with their never-ending energy and enthusiasm. We look forward to taking lessons learned from this year and making the 2021 CareerExpo and SkillsUSA Georgia Championships even bigger and better."

Several Worlds representing various construction-related disciplines were open for students to visit along with CEFGA's World of Interviews, where the K12 Pipeline team helped connect students with employers to discuss potential job, apprenticeship and internship opportunities.

more employers are recognizing the need to connect with students as they address the consequences of an aging and dwindling workforce.

At the World of Electrical Contracting, Allison-Smith Company Vice-President Michael Mikko also was talking to students about options.

"This event is good for construction because it has all the trades out here, and for the kids coming out here, it opens their eyes to see all the different things they can do," Mikko said. "People don't realize the money that they can make in this industry. So, I think it's very beneficial that they get a first-hand look and talk to contractors and employees directly and see what their options are."

Another message for students is that a college degree is not necessarily required to succeed in the construction industry. Opportunities abound for

## BREAKING RECORDS:

- **More than 9,000 attendees pre-registered for the March 12-13 event, a new record.**
- **More than 6,000 middle school, high school, and technical college students were included in that registration.**
- **More than 300 companies were represented, and nearly 200,000 square feet of exhibit and competition space was reserved at the Georgia World Congress Center.**

# R. W. Allen presents AGC Georgia Foundation Checks to East Georgia Instructors

The rewards are multi-layered for high school construction programs that take the time to be involved in the East Georgia Workforce Development Alliance and the region's annual Skills Challenge. At a gathering in February 2020, Wendy Reeve (l) and Scott Clark (r) with R. W. Allen Construction presented checks from the AGC Georgia Foundation to help construction teachers purchase classroom materials, tools and PPE.

These funds are available due to the amazing support of the sponsors of the annual East Georgia Skills Challenge. The R. W. Allen team hosts a call-a-thon each June to seek support from the area's construction community. After all expenses are paid for hosting a first-class Skills Challenge each November, the regional alliance proudly presents checks to the schools who make time to be engaged and work to offer the best learning opportunities for their students.

