



I had the privilege of becoming an apprentice back on September 26th, 2005. That date is very memorable because that is the day mine and my families lives changed. With the training I was receiving at the Training Center, along with my eagerness to learn on the job, my sponsoring contractor made me the General Labor Foreman where I was responsible for all LiUNA Laborers at multiple projects. Unfortunately and fortunately, 2009 was a difficult year for all construction workers. Unfortunately because the company that sponsored me went out of business, but fortunately because I received a great opportunity with one of the top general contractors in Chicago. During my time with that contractor, I was able to wear multiple hardhats- Site Safety Coordinator and Labor Foreman and utilize what I learned as an apprentice. I continued to grow and learn the best practices of the trade. On January 6th, 2014, a I hit a new milestone in my career. I became an instructor with LiUNA Chicagoland Laborers' District Council Training and Apprenticeship Fund where I later became a LiUNA Certified Instructor, and then Assistant Training Director. I transferred to the Apprenticeship Department where my roots began in 2005, as an Apprenticeship Coordinator. My passion is to help those that come after me and guide them to be the best LiUNA Laborer they can be.

-Alfredo Ascencio

The Laborers Apprenticeship Program was a very rewarding experience for me. I used it as a tool to network with laborers working in different industries. The coordinator at the time, Paul, was passionate and seasoned as a laborer and very relatable. He was someone you could talk to if needed. The instructors were excellent, each of them was unique in their own way as they had come from many different fields in the construction industry. My career fast tracked. Right out of the Apprenticeship Program I earned the role of Foreman and a year and a half after that I was General Foreman. I held that role for a year and was promoted to Superintendent. I am and individual who chose to take full utilization of all training and networking at max capacity, at school and in the field. I'm living proof that advancement is possible if you work hard and put forth great effort in everything you do, starting with the Apprenticeship Program. All of this was possible by having determination, a strong work ethic, and an intense inner need to be the best at what I do no matter what the task is. I believe this should be a core trait of all laborers working in the field. Go get it!

-Kenney Vairo

I, Kody Molitor, am currently and Apprenticeship Coordinator at LiUNA Chicagoland Laborers District Council & Apprenticeship Fund. The Fund represents a diverse group of over 20,000 hardworking men and women in the construction, municipal, and industrial sectors. I specifically serve the apprentices of the Apprenticeship Program. I am one of the three Apprenticeship Coordinators with the Fund that mentors and guides the apprentices through the program and their careers. I started construction at a young age working with my father. I started my career with Power Construction and was sponsored into the Apprenticeship Program at 19 years old in March 2007. My March 2009, I graduated the Apprenticeship Program only to take all the integral training and work my way up the ladder at Power Construction. In February



2010, I became Site Safety Coordinator on my own project building, the Kishwaukee Cancer Center in Dekalb, IL. From there, the projects kept getting larger, only for my last complete project to be a 50-story building in the heart of downtown Chicago in 2016-2018. Then I was one of two Senior Safety Coordinators and a Laborer Foreman during this project. In January 2019, I left Power Construction and started at the Fund as an instructor. In 2020, I was given an opportunity to champion the efforts to become accredited by the Council on Occupational Education (COE), a very prestigious honor. Even though the Fund is still in the process of this, completing the self-study project to submit for the accreditation is one of my biggest accomplishments I have ever achieved. I have had some of the best mentors and teachers (Fund instructors, foremen, and superintendents) throughout my career and I know my success is due to those who taught me along the way. I now exhaust all my time as an Apprenticeship Coordinator to instill the knowledge and mentorship back into the apprentice laborers of today. There is no greater feeling than being apart of an apprentice's success story.

-Kody Molitor

I went through the Laborers Apprenticeship in the early 2000's and graduated in 2002. Being an apprentice opened a door for me in life that I thought was only for those with degrees. I was a homeowner at 23 and had income property by 25. I worked very hard for my contractor and did well financially and morally for my family. My family always had great insurance and the ability to get the best care if needed. When an opportunity came up to try and become an instructor at the Training Fund, I jumped on it. My career has come full circle and my life has been fulfilling. I have given my children someone to look up to and be proud of. It was all possible because of the apprenticeship.

-Raphael Adlam

The Apprenticeship Program was very beneficial to my success out in the field as well as today. The training and hands-on learning that I receive helped me become more knowledgeable and employable. Because of my experience at the Training Center, I was able to become a Site Safety Labor Foreman for my previous employer and now I am an instructor giving that knowledge back to others. Being apart of the Apprenticeship Program gave me an opportunity to change my life for the better and for that I am forever grateful.

-Edwin Togba

I began as an apprentice laborer in December of 2000. My two-year apprenticeship was closer to three years due to being short on hours. My first year was rough. When I began, it was winter, and no jobs opened until late spring. In 2001 I worked for a bridge contractor and worked plenty of hours, but that project was done for the season in November, and I was back off again.



The following spring, I was called in to work for a general contractor. My first jobsite with this company was at St. Francis hospital in Evanston. You can't forget a daily drive to Evanston! I began my new career by performing architectural demolition and clean up. Aggressive schedules, learning from my mistakes and a strive for excellence assisted in my quick and steady development.

Due to gradually increasing successes and learning experiences over my first 5 years of becoming a journeyman laborer, I became a noted authority of infection prevention during healthcare construction. This specialty led me to LiUNA Training in 2012. While still working in the field as Senior Site Safety Coordinator and Labor Forman, I was utilized by LiUNA as a subject matter expert for the LiUNA I.C.R.A. (Infection Control Risk Assessment) course. Since becoming an instructor at the Training Fund in 2014, I've had the privilege of training other LiUNA instructors in this course nationally. I've facilitated training of the I.C.R.A. curriculum for instructors from all over the world. This has enabled me to directly affect patient safety and positively effect training internationally regarding the processes of infection control in healthcare.

The foundation that was created by the contractor and laborer apprenticeship has shown me the benefits that hard work and dedication can bring. A significant part about my journey during and post apprenticeship is that I've continued to evolve and become better at my craft. I can look back and remember multiple learning experiences and successes that began early in my apprenticeship. The learning and growth do not stop.

-Marcus Roberts

In 2018, I was encouraged by my significant other to apply for the Water Department Apprenticeship Program. I remember glancing at the online application and reviewing the requirements and job responsibilities. As I reviewed the duties, I told myself, "What could I possibly do at the Water Department? I do not know anything about construction." I decided not to apply and to move forward with finding another job that better suited me. After high school I went straight to college and obtained my master's degree in Mental Health Social Work. Despite the pressure from my family to attend college, I was never educated about blue collar jobs or apprenticeship programs that can teach you different trade skills.

In 2020, my significant other informed me that the Water Department Apprenticeship Program was hiring. This time he made sure that I applied for this opportunity. I was hesitant because I knew nothing about construction. I was currently working at a non-profit agency, barely any benefits, non-union, no pension, and making only \$23.00 an hour. I decided to take a leap of faith and give this new change of career a chance. I needed to provide a better healthy lifestyle for my children with great benefits. In the beginning everything was going well. They had placed me in the inventory department, and I was getting adjusted to learning about different pipes and other materials needed in the field. Everyone kept telling me to not get used to this environment, that eventually I'd be switched to "New Construction". The day of me getting rotated to New Construction arrived. I was beyond scared with high anxiety. I completed my first week in Sewer New Construction, and on that Friday during lunch, I sat in my car crying. As tears



rolled down my face, I was writing my resignation letter. As it's a male dominated environment, I felt lost and unwanted. It was more of a challenge and a deterrent.

That day a senior laborer that's been in the city for nearly 14 years, asked "what's wrong? You look sad." I looked at him and told him that the job was not for me. I would be sending my resignation letter. He looked at me and said, "you really want to quit? There are not enough women in this industry. You could make a great living out of this career. You're a part of the LiUNA family, a union of brothers and sisters who want to see you succeed. Put your big girl boots on and show them what you got. I believe in you." I followed his advice, and it was one of the best decisions I ever made. Every day you'll learn more and more, and how powerful you've become in this industry.

I'm extremely grateful for this apprenticeship program and the opportunities it has presented. I believe for me; this apprenticeship was the right path for my future. It has allowed me to gain skills in the field, given me opportunities to learn something new, and solve different challenges in the field. This program is my benchmark throughout my apprenticeship, and it gives me confidence to be a great laborer in the field and strive to be successful and be great. Attending classes is very critical to me because it gives me accurate information, proper training, and teaches me about safety in the field. I also have great instructors who provide support, expectations, and provide the highest quality in educating us about the construction industry. LiUNA has taught me to work together and ensure that everyone is safe and can go home to their families. I've been blessed to come across 1092 laborers, plumbers, bricklayers, and engineers who have guided me, and had experiences and opportunities presented to me that have allowed me to grow in this industry. I would like to add, as a woman in this industry; this has been a challenge. As it's a male dominated environment I had felt lost and unwanted. I felt like I had to prove myself to gain respect and succeed in the construction industry. In addition, I've encountered days where I have worked in zero-degree weather for 12 hours, pouring rain, extremely hot weather, and even covered head to toe in mud, and during those times I wonder how people do this job for so many years. But the other side of it is the rewarding aspect of seeing your hard work in the field and being respected. I have no regrets about my choice in becoming an apprentice. This was the perfect opportunity, very rewarding with no limits to what I could achieve in the nearest future.

- Lizahira Navarro

Throughout my career as a laborer, the CLTAF has always been a resource available anytime I wanted to use it. Through the Apprenticeship Program I became familiar with the facility and its educators, and it provided me with an understanding of what skills could be called for and applied on the jobsite. Laborer has always been a general term because it covers such a broad scope of what you might be asked to do. Every time a new challenge arose, I found myself at the center of that challenge because I had taken a class on it at the Training Center. After a few years, a few employers, and an economic downturn, I always had the Training Center available to renew certifications or learn new skills. Having those certifications helped to make me more employable and on more than one occasion proved so.



Today, as a Business Agent for Local 1035, I know every apprentice is taking those same classes, and getting the same set of skills to make them the best laborer they can be. All laborers have that resource available to them as well, so the opportunity is there for them to expand their skillset, and for me personally, it all started with a few classes in the Apprenticeship Program.

-Greg Krettler

APPRENTICES

It is a beautiful experience because I have learned a lot in the course of each class that I have attended. Every teacher I have met has been patient and responsible. Their explanations have been very clear, and hearing about their experiences has been important to my safety at work.

-Cesar Cabrera

This apprenticeship has helped me gain the experience I need to move forward in this field. The experience I have gained through the courses has prepared me for the basics in this trade. For that I am thankful.

-Erica Garcia

The apprenticeship is an introduction to general construction. It is an opportunity to learn and get hands on experience with different tools and utilize them in various real-world scenarios.

-Eric Grimaldo

What does apprenticeship mean to me? To me, it means the opportunity to earn money all while being able to learn skills and gain knowledge without going into debt. It means allowing me to have a better future, provide for myself and my family, and have a career in the trades.

-Laura Luna