

HAWAII UNIONS: KEEPING IT ALL IN THE OHANA

Times are tough and chances are they won't get better soon enough. With the underlying mission of protecting Hawaii's everyday worker, construction unions are doing their part to help Hawaii's struggling contractors and subcontractors. Here's a sample of their efforts:

LOCAL PRIDE

On Aug. 18, District Council 50 — which is comprised of the painters, glaziers, floorlayers and tapers unions — launched its "Local Jobs for Local People" campaign at a public rally joined by other unions and private businesspeople.



The grand opening of the new Hawaii Carpenters Union Training Center was held on May 23.

The message is clear. With the scarcity of jobs, the few available in Hawaii should go to those workers who live, play and work in Hawaii, not to imported mainland workers or illegal immigrants. While it's not a new objective, there has been more awareness raised about the issue in this current state of the industry, where the jobs are in short supply and the competition fierce.

"Our union has always worked hard to ensure that as many projects as possible — both public and private — go to local unionized contractors," says Ronald Taketa, financial secretary/business representative for the Hawaii Carpenters Union, Local 745. "The perception is that there is more focus on this issue now, but it's probably because the recession has caused such a big drop-off in work that every project receives more attention from those who depend on our industry."

"In tough economic times, we see a trend of mainland contractors coming to Hawaii to compete for jobs against our local contractors. Most of them don't use local hands," comments Damien Kim, business manager and financial secretary for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), Local 1186. "What people don't realize is that the profits (these mainland contractors make) go back to the mainland and don't recirculate back into our local economy."

Kim continues, "What's hard is we can't just walk onto certain projects and investigate on our own. That's where we need the state Department of Commerce and Consumers Affairs (DCCA) and RICO (DCCA's regulatory arm) to come out and help us, primarily with more enforcement."

STAYING COMPETITIVE

"One of the most important things our union has done to help our contractors and our members secure more work in this downturn was to defer all wage increases for two years," says Taketa. "This wage freeze is critical to keeping our contractors competitive in a shrinking market."

The IBEW also recently ratified its contract in July, extending the expiration date from August 2010 to August 2011.

The unions believe another key to staying competitive is by providing highly skilled craftspeople, and despite the bleak economy, several have expanded and improved their training programs.

For example, Taketa says, "We've strengthened our training program so our contractors are provided with highly skilled and productive workers, now and in the future. We recently opened our new, state-of-the-art training center in

Kapolei, which will benefit generations of carpenters in the years ahead."

And in May, IBEW unveiled its new Green Jobs Curriculum, which focuses on the latest energy-efficient technologies, including photovoltaic systems and wind turbines.

Finally, the Plumbers and Fitters United Association, Local 675, recently opened its new Iwilei Training Center. Classes now will be available at three training venues: Iwilei, the union's Pearl City Training Center and Honolulu Community College.



IBEW's Damien Kim speaks at the launch of the union's new green curriculum and expanded training program in May.

In addition to contracts and training, Taketa adds, "Although our union also supports CIP projects, particularly those that are 'shovel ready' in the short term, much of our effort is directed at laying the foundation for future projects such as rail transit, the Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) project and many private development projects around the state so we will be in the position to win as much work as possible when the economy begins to improve." **BI**

QUALITY GUARANTEED

"When we build...let us think that we build forever..." -John Ruskin

• SUPERIOR QUALITY

Quality is job one for Local 675. As Union plumbers, pipefitters, refrigeration fitters, air-conditioning fitters, fire-sprinkler fitters, and welders, Local 675 guarantees quality, defect-free work that is completed on time, and within budget. We are a committed work-force of vibrant, active members who perform their duties with accuracy and integrity. Our workforce is thoroughly trained in technical skills, safety, health requirements and industry codes. On-going attention is given to improving training methods so as to ensure only the best possible protection for Hawaii's consumers and fragile environment.



• TOP TRAINING

Local 675 apprentices are accepted only after a rigorous testing and selection process. Each apprentice undergoes a five-year program consisting of 10,000 work hours plus ten semesters of related classroom instruction coupled with manipulative, hands-on training which also earns credit toward a college Associates Degree. Local 675's commitment to excellence also extends to all course instructors and trainers. Each instructor is required to complete a five-year national trainers' program conducted by the United Association. This training not only covers the basics of the trade but also training in emerging industry techniques, equipment, and skills.



• NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

The superior quality of Local 675's training program was nationally recognized for "Outstanding Achievement in Apprenticeship Training." A blue ribbon selection committee drawn from the U.S. Department of Labor, the Bureau of Apprenticeship Training, the National Association of State and Territorial Apprenticeship Directors, and The Federal Committee on Apprenticeship, chose the Plumbers and Fitters Local 675's apprenticeship program as one of only three honored nationally across all industries for excellence in providing apprenticeship training.



PLUMBERS & FITTERS UA LOCAL UNION 675

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To Hawaii's communities

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