



STEVE DONOHOE
Washington Pride

STEVE DONOHOE: A PROFILE IN CONSTRUCTION AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

By Joye Mercer Barksdale
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MAKING STRIDES: JOBS COALITION ACCOMPLISHMENTS



While raising awareness of workforce challenges and potential barriers to employment, the JOBS Coalition and its members have combined their resources and industry expertise to achieve the following results:

- > Built the Bellevue Resource Center, a program facility serving the hard-to-reach, hard-to-employ, and returning ex-offender populations. The Center was completed on September 30, 2003.
- > Guided the creation of the Construction & Design Academy at Cardozo, providing District students access, training, and preparation for careers in the construction industry and trades after graduation. The Academy officially opened in September 2005.
- > Leading the Children of Mine Center, in partnership with the Architecture Research Institute at the University of the District of Columbia, in designing, planning and developing a new community center in the Anacostia/Hillsdale community, and restoring the historic home of the city's first mayor. □



ENRICHING LIVES
Oscar-nominated actress Taraji P. Henson accepts President's Award

DREAM ACADEMY GALA SPOTLIGHTS IMPORTANCE OF MENTORING YOUTH

ACTRESS TARAJI P. HENSON HONORED

The stars converged in the nation's capital to honor those who have dedicated their time and resources to helping children from troubled homes, while celebrating the achievements of young people who dare to dream of brighter futures and breaking the intergenerational cycle of incarceration.

By Arnesa A. Howell

Oscar-nominated actress Taraji P. Henson, from such acclaimed films as *Hustle & Flow* and most recently *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, and actor Louis Gossett Jr.

were both honored on May 21 for their commitments to enriching the lives of youth at the U.S. Dream Academy Gala in Washington, D.C.

"It's always a pleasure to be honored, because it's the last thing that I think about when I go to work—who's going to recognize me. I have such passion for the craft. Whenever someone recognizes me and my hard work, it's

like a little love tap from God saying, 'You're on the right path,'" Henson, a single mom with a passion for helping disabled and less fortunate children, told *JOBS Pathways* before accepting the President's Award.

The actress, who attended the gala with her mom by her side, has always had the support of her family, which she acknowledges encouraged her to dream as a child.

"It all starts at home," the actress continued. "I can always sit back and say how hard it is, or I can look at the positive and I can get up and

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DREAM KIDS
'Walking with Authority.'

SUSAN L. TAYLOR:
'Not On My Watch.'

Dream Academy *Continued from page 1*
try to break the cycle. I'm raising my son to not be a single parent. I'm raising him with morals and values so that he can grow up and have a family. I'm teaching him what it is to work hard and make a living and not make excuses. Because as African Americans, all the odds are stacked against us when we're born. So once you know that, you have to overcome it instead of succumbing to negativity."

The tone of the evening proved inspirational, with sprinkles of comedic relief from comedian and actor Chris Tucker, who co-emceed the gala. Also spotlighted during the gala were the good works of the Dream Academy, an innovative afterschool program started in 1997 to serve children of incarcerated parents; it has since expanded to assist children struggling in school. A rousing musical performance by the Dream-Kids—a choir comprised of children enrolled in learning centers in Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and Baltimore—had guests twirling their napkins in the air as the group proclaimed, "I'm walking with authority."

'Not On My Watch'

Empowerment was at the heart of the message delivered by Susan L. Taylor, the keynote speaker at the event. Taylor, who founded the National CARES Mentoring Movement (dedicated to recruiting one million mentors), admonished those who stand by observing the problems faced by youth, but doing

nothing to make a difference for the better.

She stressed that there are schools where "children don't have books and the teachers are not paid well...[where] children sit in their winter coats all winter long because the schools don't have enough money to buy heat," and where there are "bathroom stalls without doors and toilets that don't flush."

"I'm not pointing the finger at the White House," Taylor said, "I'm not pointing the finger at our legislators. I'm looking in the mirror and saying, 'Not on my watch.'"

In fact, she said the numbers speak for themselves—58 percent of black 4th graders are functionally illiterate. The statistics are "daunting" when it comes to looking at what's happening in Black America. "Our brothers—black men—are so demonized in society," Taylor, editor-in-chief

emeritus of *Essence Magazine*, asserted.

The importance of education cannot be overstressed, as "underserved schools are the pipeline to prisons." And Taylor noted that it costs at least \$30,000 to maintain one prison inmate for one year; the cost of educating a youngster for a year is a "fraction" of that.

As she came to the close of her address, Taylor perfectly summed up how working together as a community to "nurture our children" can help steer them from the path of the "for-profit prison system" and towards a bright future where dreams transform into realities. Citing a Kenyan proverb, she said: "Spider webs united can tie up a lion." □

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STEVE DONOHOE

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As president of Donohoe Construction Company, Steve Donohoe's days begin when he leaves his Poolesville, Md. home at 6 a.m. to head for the company's Washington, D.C. headquarters, and often don't end until more than 12 hours later. Although much of his day is consumed with meetings and site visits, he still finds the time to devote to his other passion: exposing students and young adults to the construction industry through working with the D.C. Students Construction Trades Foundation and the Academy of Construction & Design at Cardozo.

Donohoe has been president of Donohoe Construction, part of The Donohoe Companies Inc., since 2001. Aside from construction, the companies include development, real estate, hotel management and building operation/maintenance services divisions. This year marks the 125th anniversary of The Donohoe Companies, founded by family patriarch John F. Donohoe, an Irish émigré who started out as a grocer on Capitol Hill, and in 1884 opened the region's first full-service real estate company.

The construction division, founded in 1955 and consistently ranked among the Top 400 construction companies by *Engineering News-Record*, specializes in commercial, multi-family residential, hotel, education, healthcare and senior-living facilities throughout the mid-Atlantic region.

Donohoe clearly takes great pride in being a native Washingtonian and continuing John F. Donohoe's legacy. Yet it was never a foregone conclusion that he would make a career for himself in construction, let alone become president of the company.

"My uncles were always involved, but my father wasn't—he was a doctor," he explains. "Quite coincidentally, I got interested in construction as a kid, looking at cranes, bulldozers and things like that. And later, it all came together."

As a high school student, Donohoe spent

summers working as a laborer. And later during summer breaks home from Lafayette College in Easton, Pa., where he graduated with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering, Donohoe held a variety of jobs with The Donohoe Companies, mostly filling in for employees on vacation. "I punched time cards in the computer room, collected rent at some buildings, did the payroll, did some work in accounting," he recalls. "All of it helped me to get an understanding of the company's inner workings. People often think only about the blue-collar workers doing the sweat equity in construction, but there are a lot of elements that go on behind the scenes."

His first full-time job with Donohoe Construction was as a superintendent of a downtown office building. He then transitioned into project management before steadily moving up the ranks to the level of vice president and director of development projects. At that time, he worked on such projects as the Chevy Chase Pavilion Mixed Use Project and the build-to-suit office and studio for W*USA 9 Television.

Donohoe is involved in the other companies as a member of the board of directors and the executive committee. Being part of The Donohoe Companies offers many opportunities for the divisions to work together on projects and to cultivate new business.

He is the past chairman of the board of the Associated Builders and Contractors Metro Washington Chapter, where he currently serves on its executive committee, and a board member of the D.C. Students Construction Trades Foundation. Also, Donohoe was the honorary chair of the "Meet the Future" luncheon in May, held to recognize graduates of the Cardozo Academy.

For Donohoe, being active with the Construction Trades Foundation is about participating in the life of a community that has sustained The Donohoe Companies for generations. It is also his

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PROPOSED STANDARDS AIM TO INCREASE JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR EX-OFFENDERS

In its series of spring meetings, the JOBS Coalition Ex-Offender Task Force continues to move forward in its discussion of breaking stereotypes for "returning citizens" to improve employment opportunities. And to help diminish these negative viewpoints, the task force expanded its work on proposed standards focusing on ex-offenders, training providers, and employers. *By Arnesa A. Howell*

The benefit of these standards, says JOBS Coalition Adviser Carol Randolph, is that they would "state exactly what we're going to do—they're transparent and hold you accountable." She added that implementing standards would inject accountability at all levels.

"The beauty of this is that the responsibility flows both ways. An addendum can be signed by the person who's enrolled in the program, the people who are to provide the training, and it can be signed by the people who are hiring the individuals," she explained. "Everyone can lay out exactly what their expectations are and what you can expect them to do."

With that understanding, the group started drafting actual standards for all parties involved.

Standards & Responsibility

The once robust working group of 35 members has now whittled down to a much smaller, core group that is committed to seeing the Task Force's project through. It is these dedicated individuals representing community and faith-based organizations and local government entities, among others, who outlined the draft standards that would serve as the foundation of discussions in future meetings.

With the returning citizen being a key component of this issue, the group started by focusing on the expectations for this targeted population. The proposed standards for returning ex-offenders included that they must:

- Be in compliance with all requirements associated with reentry, including parole.
- Be in compliance with Court Services & Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA), reporting regularly to the community supervisor officer.
- Be willing to participate in our efforts to employ them.
- Involve family engagement, where appropriate.

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Proposed Standards *Continued from page 3*

Meanwhile, the draft standards for training providers included:

- Staying abreast of best practices and employment trends.
- Maintaining a history of positive work outcomes.
- Providing reliable screening and assessment tools.
- Having a reliable documentation and tracking mechanism in place.
- Being willing to be periodically assessed by a to-be-named accrediting organization.

And for employers, the group proposed that they must:

- Be open-minded to the challenges of hiring unemployed, under-employed, and returning ex-offenders.

- Be willing to engage in a continuing dialogue with a referred agency for a specified period of time.

And finally, when it comes to the faith-based organizations, they should provide returning citizens with wraparound services in areas such as mental health, in every ward of the city, to help this population make a successful transition into the community. Also, faith-based groups should offer family support such as childcare services, counseling and mentoring. Randolph noted that many returning citizens face trouble with other issues, such as paying back child support, which these groups could help to negotiate.

Having made some ground within the workforce, next up: Identifying specifics under each proposed standard. □

Steve Donohoe *Continued from page 3*

way of helping to provide more opportunities for vocational education. “Having the opportunity to be exposed to construction might spark some interest in a career. Maybe a young person will start working in a trade and then elect to go into management or architectural engineering,” he says. “There is talent out there that has to have an avenue to be developed.”

Donohoe’s work with the foundation and Cardozo Academy primarily involves providing staff members who can guide students and act as resources. He’s also helped find instructors to teach classes in plumbing and masonry construction. Even in the midst of a recession that has slowed construction projects, he emphasizes that the industry must “keep nurturing future workers and leaders so they are prepared” when the economic climate improves.

After years in the industry, Donohoe still gets a kick out of seeing each project evolve, from the initial stages of qualifying for a job and putting together a winning bid, to completion. He wants to generate that same enthusiasm in the District’s students. “We always hear about people begrudgingly going to work just because they have to,” Donohoe says. “But if you can find what you’re good at and you enjoy it, that’s perfect.” □

JOBS COALITION MISSION STATEMENT

We will work together to develop a long-term strategy that creates an environment where aspiring District residents will have unprecedented opportunity to succeed. We strive to create a fair and open system, supported by government, industry, employers and the education and faith-based communities, which seeks to properly train today’s apprentices while making an unparalleled commitment to educating students and others not yet in the workforce.

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JOBS COALITION

