



New Foundation Board Member John Tarpey

NEW FOUNDATION MEMBER TARPEY SAYS JOINING BOARD 'RIGHT THING TO DO'

By Arnesa A. Howell

John Tarpey, regional chief executive officer for the North region of Balfour Beatty Construction, is among the latest appointments to the D.C. Students Construction Trades Foundation Board
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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. □



ONE DAY AT A TIME (L to R) Miller & Long Assistant Human Resources Director Kenny Glover and Human Resources Director Otto Girr tell employees, "Don't be afraid to ask for help!"

FINDING THEIR WAY BACK

In April, Miller & Long's Human Resources Department hosted the first of a series of forums to help new hires remain successfully employed. The company followed up with a second program in July. Targeting ex-offender employees on the job 90 days or longer, each forum addressed job-related issues including interpersonal skills and attitudes in the workplace.

By Carol Randolph

A man goes to bed early and gets up even earlier so he can arrive on time at the construction site. He's showing commitment to his work – not the easiest path to travel. His dedication is putting a strain on his relationship with his long-time girlfriend, who supported him wholeheartedly before his release from prison. Now, she's having a hard time adjusting to his new life since he's come back home. His situation is not unlike that of many ex-offenders who enter the workforce after incarceration.

On a rainy Saturday morning, a provocative event is taking place in the training center at Miller & Long, a large D.C.-area employer and one of the nation's leading concrete construction companies. Human Resources

Director Otto Girr and Assistant Human Resources Director Kenny Glover are leading the company's first-ever series of forums for employees who are returning ex-offenders. Targeting those who have been on the job 90 days or longer, the forum's agenda covers a wide range of issues – from job attitude and diversity to work performance and interpersonal relations – all designed to help these workers remain successfully employed. Although the day starts with only two in attendance, that number steadily grows until a dozen employees are talking openly about their personal challenges and motivations in making their second chances count.

Kenny Glover, a nine-year employee of Miller & Long, knows these employees' struggles
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John Tarpey *Continued from page 1*
of Directors.

Tarpey, originally from a small town south of Boston called Walpole, learned about the Foundation through John McMahon, a fellow Board member who serves as president of the D.C. Students Construction Trades Foundation Board and chairman of Miller & Long Co. Inc.

“I was honored to be asked by John to be on the Board, and I’m very much looking forward to it,” says Tarpey, who’s been with Balfour Beatty Construction for more than 30 years. “John is very sincere and passionate about what he’s doing, and I have to applaud that.”

Tarpey – appointed in March – says that both he and the company have supported the efforts of the Foundation by attending meetings with city officials and the mayor’s staff on issues of importance to the construction industry. Also, they have provided financial support for programs and activities such as helping sponsor the Meet the Future luncheons. And this past summer, the construction company hired its first student intern, a student enrolled in the Academy of Construction and Design at Cardozo (ACAD).

Besides McMahon, Tarpey simply states his other motivation for joining the Board: “It’s the right thing to do.”

“This has been a successful program and it works. It can be scaled up with more support,” he says of the ACAD program.

The Foundation works in partnership with D.C. Public Schools to support ACAD, and the nonprofit also sponsors adult education at the Academy.

A Steady Climb

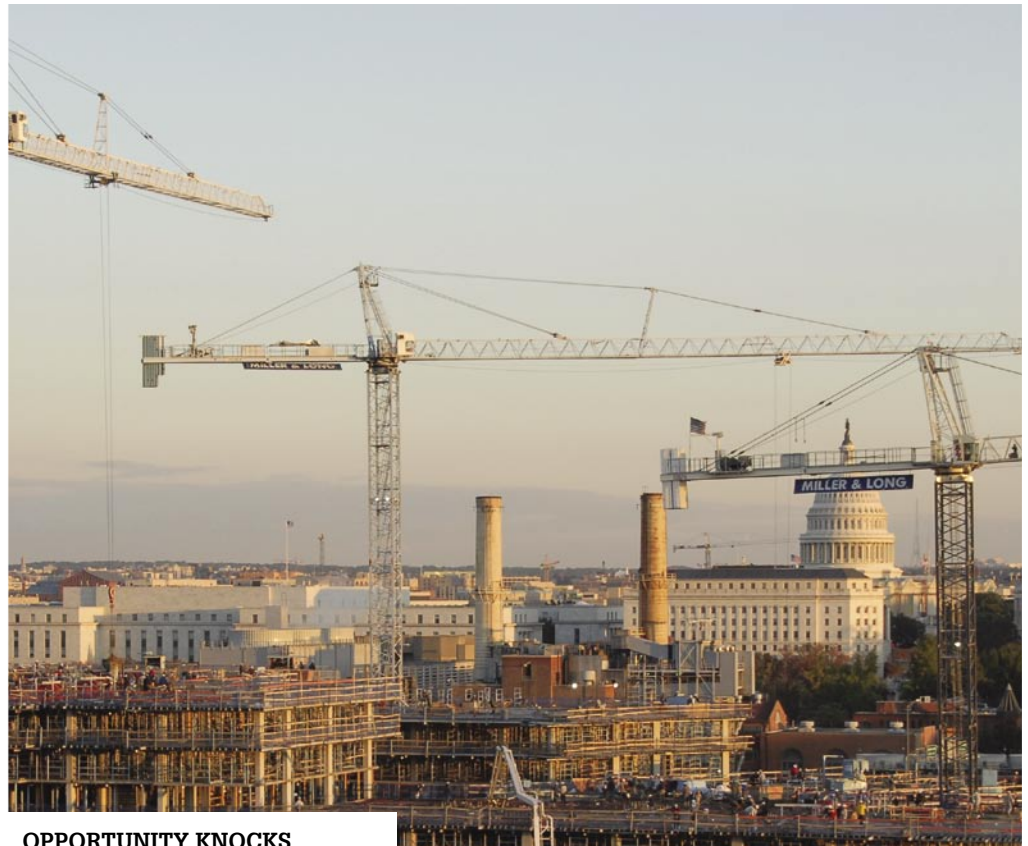
A 1978 graduate of the University of Massachusetts with a Bachelor of Arts degree in civil engineering, Tarpey’s entry into the construction industry was one of opportunity. The economy was depressed and jobs were scarce, he recalls. So, when his professor announced that Balfour Beatty Construction (then Centex) had a job opening for an estimator, he jumped at the chance. “I was the only one to raise my hand,” he remembers.

Over the years, Tarpey has moved from estimating to operations. Following a five-year stint with Clark Construction Group, where he rose to vice president and director of operations, he returned to Balfour, the company where he got his start fresh out of college.

Today, he serves as regional CEO and is a member of the company’s Executive Leadership Team. Decades later, he still loves the industry.

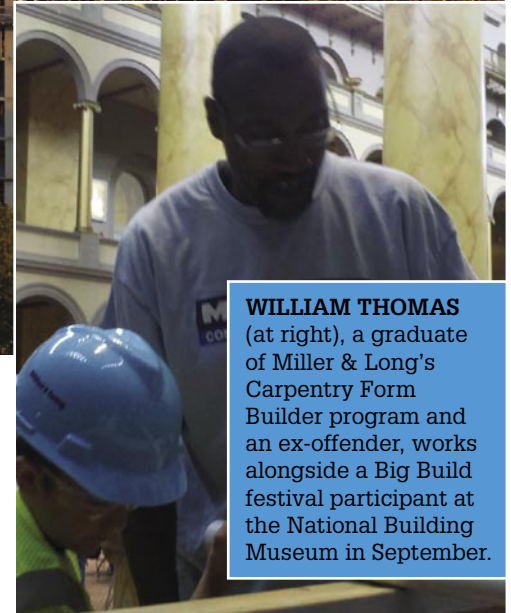
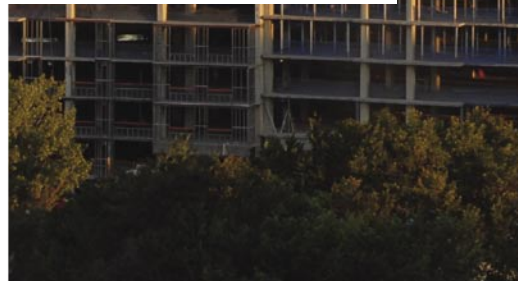
“Initially, I enjoyed the building nature. With construction you can physically see it and it’s with you forever,” he shares. “Every project is custom and different. You get to work on so many unique projects over the years, especially in D.C.”

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OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

Miller & Long has projects throughout the D.C.-metro area.



WILLIAM THOMAS
(at right), a graduate of Miller & Long’s Carpentry Form Builder program and an ex-offender, works alongside a Big Build festival participant at the National Building Museum in September.

Finding Their Way Back *Continued from page 1*

all too well. A returning ex-offender, he stresses the importance of maintaining a positive attitude, saying it’s a key factor in helping employees – particularly new hires – stay employed.

“We emphasize to everyone that they are part of a team where having a positive attitude on the job and building mutual respect are critical components of getting the job done right,” stresses Glover, adding that he wants to know how each employee is faring mentally and physically. “Construction work is hard work and often done under some very hard conditions.”

From wind and rain to snow and extreme temperatures, construction is a field that requires dedication to the trade and the right tools and equipment – like wearing steel toe boots for safety and protection – to get the job done. However, getting the right equipment can often be a significant challenge for men with no money who are struggling to start over.

One newly hired employee states that when he was released from prison, he didn’t have enough

money to buy the recommended Red Wing work boots, which can cost upwards of \$200. Lacking the necessary financial resources, he bought a pair of oversized, used boots from a consignment shop – stuffing extra pairs of socks inside just to make them fit.

“Don’t be afraid to ask for help!” is the sentiment both Glover and Girr reiterated throughout the forum, encouraging employees to seek assistance from the Human Resources Department if they find themselves facing similar circumstances. For those who are accustomed to hiding their feelings from others, this can be very challenging. But Girr and Glover emphasized the importance

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LEADING BY EXAMPLE Over the years, Kenny Glover (left), on a panel with JOBS Coalition Legal Adviser Rod Woodson, has devoted time to speaking about his journey from incarceration to gainful employment with Miller & Long.

Finding Their Way Back *Continued from page 2* of speaking up and letting others know of these struggles before they become insurmountable and you're forced to leave the job.

Forum attendees reacted enthusiastically to this advice, and even offered their own strategy for helping one another: establish a "buying club" to purchase food and clothing in bulk at discounted prices.

Building Relationships

Much of the forum focused on work relationships, particularly how individuals get along with their superintendents and fellow employees. Attendees did admit that their pasts influenced their behaviors and performances on the job. For example, some say they came home from prison

with chips on their shoulders, and were reluctant to ask for help when they didn't understand something. However, they soon realized they needed to let go of negative thinking and develop positive attitudes to have on-the-job success.

"In order to turn your life around," says Glover, "you have to let go of negative attitudes and often negative people who, for one reason or another, don't want you to succeed and will do something to hold you back [and] keep you from changing your life."

And in a field that crosses cultures, race and ethnicities, language barriers can also become a concern. "When someone is telling you to look out and get out of the way, you better believe you need to understand what they are saying," says one forum attendee. While his comment

draws laughter from the crowd, it also stresses the importance of understanding the uniqueness of coworkers. At Miller & Long, for example, employees have access to handbooks of workplace Spanish phrases.

But there are obstacles outside the workplace as well. Housing and transportation are persistent issues. It's hard to find housing in neighborhoods away from the people and lifestyles that can lead back to prison. And job sites are often located in areas with limited public transportation, making it difficult for employed ex-offenders without their own vehicles to get work.

The forum offered attendees a chance to share their personal experiences while gaining a sense of inclusion. It provided a learning opportunity for both sides: Girr and Glover listened as the workers expressed insight about staying employed, becoming better employees and transforming into better family men who are able to care for themselves and their families by being gainfully employed. The ex-offender employees learned that the company they work for wants them to make the most out of their opportunities to succeed. "This is not my second chance. This is my last chance," admits one Miller & Long employee, surrounded by others with stories like his own. "I've got to make this work."

JOBS Coalition Pathways

Managing Editor: Arnesa A. Howell

Executive Editor: Carol Randolph

Copy Editor: Pam Ellison

Contributors: Arnesa A. Howell, Carol Randolph

Graphic Design: Jenn French Designs, LLC

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Board of Directors: Robert Braunohler, Bill Dean, Lynn C. French, Balchander Jayaraman, John McMahon, Debra Schoonmaker, Rev. Stephen Tucker, I. Margaret White, Hal Williams

JOBS Coalition Legal Adviser: Roderic Woodson

The *JOBS Coalition Pathways* is the exclusive property of the JOBS Coalition, 633 Park Road, NW, Washington, D.C. 20010; 202-726-7400. *JOBS Coalition Pathways* is dedicated to disseminating information that will help strengthen the city's apprenticeship training and job placement programs, broadening the scope to reach the young, the underserved, the unemployed and the returning ex-offender. *JOBS Coalition Pathways* is published by the Jobs Coalition.

Carol Randolph is vice president of strategic communications for Miller & Long Co. Inc. □

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He continues, "Today, what excites me is the change in the industry and the change in technology."

Tarpey is also enthusiastic about the future of the Foundation Board and is looking forward to being proactive. "I like the concept of getting our own people here in the company exposed to [the Foundation] and raising awareness so we can jump in and help when we have a need in our workforce," he states, adding that he's been

pleasantly surprised with the responsiveness of those within the company when new District projects emerged.

Aware of transportation hurdles, slowed construction projects and other challenges facing in-need District residents when it comes to finding gainful employment in the industry, Tarpey knows there is work to be done and is ready to be part of that effort. Says Tarpey: "I want to learn and be an active Board member right now." □

THE GO GREEN MOVEMENT

It's becoming easier to be green.

Construction companies are increasingly "going green" as they focus on their bottom lines, according to an article, *Careers in Green Construction*, released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (www.bls.gov). Sustainable building incorporates innovative design and materials, making projects eco-friendly while reducing operating costs.

The movement is fueling job opportunities in the skilled trades. Often requiring specialized training, these jobs offer individuals with varying levels of education and experience the chance to contribute to the industry while learning something new, often through on-the-job training and apprenticeships.

JOBS COALITION PROMISES

- Provide opportunities for District residents to secure gainful employment.
- Remove barriers that prevent meaningful employment.
- Provide educational and training opportunities for all District residents interested in pursuing careers in various industries and trades.
- Work toward the creation of a comprehensive, fair, and more open system of training and hiring the underserved, unemployed, and returning ex-offenders.
- Ensure that the training and educational skills being taught are relevant to the job market of today and tomorrow.
- Engage elected and appointed officials to support legislation and maintain appropriate oversight to ensure gainful employment for District residents, including the underserved, unemployed, and returning ex-offenders.

JOBS COALITION
633 Park Road, NW
Washington, DC 20010

