Seniors Sign to Enter the Workforce

At a ceremony Wednesday, May 23, for College and Career Signing Day, Kannapolis City Schools honored eight seniors who—through a partnership with Rowan-Cabarrus Community College and local businesses—will graduate with career certifications and professional credentials. The students will begin high-paying, high-skilled jobs at either S&D Coffee or Wayne Brothers Construction as soon as they cross the stage in June.

Workforce

Most of us have dealt with workforce issues throughout our careers. More specifically, dealing with the difficulty of hiring craftsmen who are both skills capable, and who possess the values of our individual companies. So the supposed phenomenon of dealing with the Gen Xers, Millennials and others more contemporary is nothing particularly new for most of us. Or is it? I think the jury may still be out. I think it is mostly the same troubling issues with a new, more visible face.

Individuals within the workforce who are capable of the entry level, heavy lifting tasks of our industry, are typically from the younger half of the working population, under 40. For the most part, the younger half of any working population is more demanding of perks, pay and promotion. Perhaps in previous eras, those who had these expectations felt less entitled than today’s group, and better prepared to earn their stripes.

What I find is substantial pockets of under 40s who want and expect to work hard and do the heavy lifting of a construction environment. Though it does seem more and more difficult to find these valuable candidates. In part I think it’s so hard to find them because this small minority who hold high these core values, generally seek to distance themselves from others in their age group who are not well suited for our industry. They are ok with stepping back and letting the label of over-entitled settle on their peers. They intentionally may not respond to social media sites and other technology based means of communication. They may be more likely to look at opportunities with companies who can raise the bar for them.

I encourage our members to stay the course. Certainly we should seek to modernize our job opportunities with technology, advanced equipment and educational opportunities. However, I feel equally strongly that we should proudly hold out to find those who do possess the necessary work ethic befitting the older employees. Maybe think about substantially different ways to attract these elusive jewels of the younger population to your program. Then reward those who you do find, with a dynamic work opportunity/environment. Praise them relentlessly. They need it, so they say. I feel certain you will benefit to some degree and who knows, it may prove this generation of skilled construction craftsmen can be more productive than those of the past. No other discovery would save more of my hair or make my days any better.
Executive Director’s Message

Bev Garnant

The U.S. is facing its deadliest drug crisis on record (CDC, 2017). The opioid epidemic is one of the biggest overall health crises facing the U.S. and it shows no sign of slowing down. 45,000 lives were lost in the 12 months ending September 2017 and according to experts there is nowhere near enough funding slotted to fight the problem. This industry has been particularly affected by this epidemic, as construction workers are among the most susceptible to opioid abuse.

Two of the primary ways this crisis affects our industry are as it relates to safety and the workforce. The over-prescription and over-use of opioids is shrinking the U.S. labor force. People over 16 employed or actively looking for employment peaked in 2000 and has declined steadily since. An October 2017 PBS News Hour report was titled “How Opioids Have Decimated the American Workforce.”

I was recently asked to join a local committee to study opioid use in the St. Louis construction industry. Members include government officials, social agency representatives, union management, police officers, emergency room doctors, professors from the Wash. U. School of Medicine and others. It’s been eye-opening, intriguing and distressing to try and wrap my head around the problem from all these different angles. I’ve been able to contribute to the conversation regarding safety, as some on the committee advocate for allowing workers on narcon or naloxone to return to the job site to help solve the shrinking workforce problem. One of the union members said, “The concrete guys who set forms and pour sidewalks can’t hurt anyone. They should be able to return to work, no problem.”

A 2017 survey by the National Safety Council (NSC) found that 7 in 10 employers are impacted by prescription misuse. Workers 25-54 are hardest hit by the epidemic, with an estimated 20% decline in male workforce participation and 25% for females. 48% of those surveyed reported a negative business impact as a result, i.e. a near-miss or close-call, and an increase in workplace injuries. Recent reports from ASCC safety partner CNA show spending on opioid prescriptions to be consistently 5-10% higher in construction than in any other industry. For help in how to help your company deal effectively with this problem, see the article on pg. 3 by Joe Whiteman, ASCC director of safety services.

Concrete Polishing Council

Chad Gill, Concrete Polishing Council Director

The ASCC Annual Conference 2018 is in Charlotte, NC; good news to those of us in the east. One of the main goals in merging the CPC into the ASCC was to improve the relationship between placement and polishing contractors. To this end we will offer two classes at the conference, Polishing 101 for floor contractors, and Concrete 101 for polishing contractors. These fundamental classes are meant to provide better understanding to the main trades involved in the production of a polished concrete floor. In addition there will be a polishable overlayment demo featuring a true-white overlay.

For World of Concrete 2019 ASCC has pressed for and received a 3-hour polishing track for the first time. This is a big achievement for the ASCC/CPC and the industry as a whole. Concrete polishing is becoming an increasingly larger part of WOC each year. This dedicated education track is testament to the scope and growth of our trade in concrete construction. The following courses will be offered and taught by CPC members:

- **Polished Concrete; 3 Hour Track**
  - From Bid to Contract (Preparing for Successful Concrete Polishing)
  - Fundamentals of Polished Concrete
  - Polishing Retail and Industrial Slabs
  - Expectations and Maintenance of Polished Concrete Slabs
  - Polished Concrete Overlays

- **Concrete Floors and Slabs; 3 Hour Track**
  - Creating the Concrete Canvas for Polished Concrete

- **Engineering; 90 Minute Track**
  - Specifying Polished Concrete

In the run up to these events I will introduce discussion topics that lead into these courses. Feel free to share your thoughts as we work together to make concrete polishing a more reproducible and better understood process.
Opioid Abuse Epidemic – What Can We Do

Bev pointed out that construction workers are amongst the most susceptible to opioid abuse and our industry has an ever-decreasing workforce. To perform our work and do it safely, we need a healthy, robust, and consistent talent pool. However, we face the ever-increasing risk of employing an individual with this addiction or the potential of a current employee developing an addiction, work-related or not. We need to do our part to help reduce the staggering numbers of individuals at risk or faced with this addiction.

Step One: If your company has not already done so, implement a drug free workplace policy. Consult with your insurance carrier or seek legal council to ensure that all local and federal requirements are being met, along with any collective bargaining agreements that apply to your operation. Implementing such a policy, along with a robust substance abuse testing program, including pre-hire, job transfer, post incident, return to work, and reasonable cause testing, provide several opportunities. These include the ability to identify a worker who may be suffering from, or has developed an addiction during employment, a potential hire with an addiction, and the ability to protect workers who work with or around a person under the influence of an opioid, impairing that individual’s ability to work safely.

Regarding substance abuse testing, know exactly what type of drug screen you are paying for and are utilizing. The one thing you should have control over ensuring that no matter the form of drug analysis, the panel of drugs being tested for include expanded opiates, which tests for the commonly abused prescription opioids. As of January 1, 2018, the Department of Transportation expanded their 5-panel drug test regimen to include opioids. This includes testing for the semi-synthetic opioids Hydrocodone, Hydromorphone, Oxycodone, and Oxymorphone, some of the prescribed opioids contributing to this epidemic. This test should serve as a solid example for your own testing requirements.

In addition, coordinate with your Occupational Health Clinics to determine if they adhere to the CDC Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain. The intent of this guideline is to improve the way opioids are prescribed to give patients better access to safer and more effective pain management, while reducing those who abuse, misuse or overdose. By doing this, you are ensuring your workers a quality clinic to tend to their injuries, look out for their recovery and the exposures that come with it, and improve medical case management.

Finally, communicate and educate your employees. We can do our part by creating an awareness of the addictive qualities and negative side effects of these drugs. Incorporate training and information about this epidemic as part of your company’s employee health plan and training regimen. Do your part as contractors by spreading awareness and knowledge of this epidemic to protect our number one resource, our employees.

What Pattern Wood You Like?

It’s clear that wood is fully back in style. No, I have not (yet) lost my mind as Decorative CONCRETE Specialist. What I’m referring to is the trend in using stamped concrete, cementious overlays, countertops and nearly every facet of decorative concrete to create hardscapes that mimic wood. Whether a board formed wall, an overlaid front porch, even sidewalks and bridges, the lumber look is truly a hot trend in decorative concrete.

I look back on an article I wrote a couple of months ago on trends, and Chris Sullivan’s analogy of the apple going from green, to ripe, to rotten. As business people we cannot let our product rot. The wood trend is at its ripe stage now, but I do see a change from when wood plank stamps were hot 20 years ago and eventually fell out of favor. This time around, decorative concrete artisans are challenging each other to take timber up a couple of levels with workmanship. I have been amazed with the attention to detail I am seeing, with some of the advancements coming from new and better patterns, coloration techniques, and care given to vertical edges. Many associate members have dedicated resources to creating products to help the contractor make these amazing wood-look projects, so I hope this trend will last a few more years. In the meantime, what wood you like your patio to look like?
A Look at the Effects of Nonstandard Cylinder Strength Testing

The concrete industry relies heavily on the results of concrete compressive strength tests to determine specification compliance or to allow construction activities such as form removal or post-tensioning to take place. While testing the strength of concrete is a simple test and controlled by an ASTM standard, the measured results are very much dependent upon adhering strictly to the ASTM procedures. Violation of these procedures can lead to inaccurate results.

Fortunately, Richardson (“Review of Variables That Influence Measured Concrete Compressive Strength”, ASCE Journal of Materials Engineering, May 1991) was able to quantify the effect of nonstandard cylinder testing on the measured strength and summarized it into a Table. The background for this Table information can be found in Richardson’s paper and can be purchased for $30 at https://ascelibrary.org/doi/abs/10.1061/%28ASCE%290899-1561%282019%291%3A2%2895%29. Next time a measured cylinder strength is reported low, consider if one or more of these variables might have reduced that strength.

Frank Lewis to be Honored

Frank Lewis, formerly with Sundek Products, Arlington, TX and a past president of the Decorative Concrete Council, will receive the ASCC Lifetime Achievement Award at this year’s Annual Conference, September 20-23 in Charlotte, NC. The award will be presented on Thursday evening, September 20 at the event’s Awards Dinner.