



PHCC NEWS

An advertorial section sponsored by the Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors - National Association (www.phccweb.org)

Contractors, instructors focus on workforce

Plumbing and HVACR contractors are not alone in their concerns about developing tomorrow's workforce. More than 270 instructors attending the HVACR and Plumbing Instructor Workshop April 5-7 in Lansdowne, Va., showed they are strong allies in this cause.

During a question-and-answer session with contractor, educator and wholesaler panelists, the instructors were very open about their hot-button issues for the industry.

And it was very clear that their concerns are nearly identical with those of the panelists.

Attracting new people to the field, the p-h-c industry's image and marketing to consumers were at the top of discussion lists on big-picture issues. Attitude, professionalism and pride were mentioned most frequently as the top qualities everyone wants from students and their employees.

The instructor training conference was co-sponsored by the Educational Foundation of the Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors — National Association, Air Conditioning Contractors of America, Air-Conditioning and Refrigeration Institute and the Refrigeration Service Engineers Society.

Below, you'll see some of the ideas that were shared at the conference.

Contractors play key role in developing workers

One area of consensus at the HVACR and Plumbing Instructor Workshop was: "Wouldn't you rather train employees and have them leave than not train them and have them stay?"

How can contractors help attract and train apprentices in the plumbing and HVACR industry? Here are several ideas that were discussed at the workshop:

- Develop a relationship with your school board and guidance counselors and let them know about the career opportunities and wages available in the p-h-c field;
- Get to the students early — participate in career days at the elementary and middle school levels as well as high school;
- Stress the professionalism of the indus-

try in all your communications;

- Let your apprentices know that their classroom training is the top priority and don't pull them out of a class to get a job done for you;
- Train apprentices to do multiple tasks, not just one, such as placing a toilet in a "ready-made" tract house bathroom;
- Participate in Shadow Days offered by your schools;
- Think about targeting 30-, 40- and 50-year-olds who may be looking for a career change, especially in areas where layoffs are occurring; and
- Set up a supplemental in-house apprentice training program if your needs aren't met locally.



An instructor makes a point at a PHCC-sponsored discussion among contractors, wholesalers and educators on the importance of attracting and training apprentices.

Instructors must motivate students to learn

"The only thing we can fix is ourselves."

That was the message conveyed to instructors during a "Student Motivation" seminar offered at the HVACR and Plumbing Instructor Workshop. While instructors may face classroom challenges involving attitudes, motivation, self-esteem and cultural changes, seminar instructor Kirk Alter stressed that the person ultimately responsible

for overcoming these challenges is the instructor.

"If the students are unmotivated, it is because you haven't figured out how to motivate them," he said. "Know their interests. Be contemporary. Like your students. Be 100% enthusiastic, 100% of the time."

Alter also encouraged the instructors to add personal stories and actions to their lesson plans to emphasize the

immediate value of the training.

"Before the class begins, write a narrative, in layman's terms, about what the students will be able to do differently, tomorrow, because of what they learn today," he said.

"During class, tell stories that help the students connect what you are teaching in theory to what they can apply to real-world experiences."

PHCC provides the answer

PHCC, which represents more than 4,000 open shop and union p-h-c contractors, provides many solutions for workforce development. Through its top-notch apprentice program, thousands of students are professionally trained each year.

PHCC also gives members the opportunity to learn what works from other people in the trade association. For ex-

ample, the California and Cincinnati PHCC chapters offer apprentice programs that are models for others to follow. They each have their own apprentice program, a building devoted to training and innovative teaching techniques.

For more information about PHCC, visit www.phccweb.org, or call 800/533-7694.

Training is a top UA priority

Attracting, training and educating tomorrow's workforce also are top priorities of PHCC's union contractor members. Between the United Association and its locals, more than \$120 million is spent annually training members. Almost every local has its own training facility in addition to the five regional UA training facilities.

The UA will hold its annual instructor training program Aug. 14-18 in Ann Arbor, Mich. Also, the local UA chapters will be increasing the number of apprentice classes and recruiting people with special skills, such as welding.

In addition, the UA has committed significant resources to its distance-learning program.