

Local Black-Owned Business Rejuvenated by Events Center Work

Written by Advocate | BNN

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Orlando, Fla. -- True Power Electric of Orlando was on the verge of closing its doors.

Significant economic turbulence paired with a lull in new construction projects had company President Willard Holmes Jr. seriously considering closing up shop.

So serious, he had given himself a month's time to find work or he'd shut down.

But in an attempt to secure much needed revenue, the 52-year-old electrician and certified vocational educator thought it would be beneficial to attend a construction forum held by the Orlando Magic's construction managers on July 29, 2008.

The series of forums helped educate local and minority and women business enterprises about construction opportunities for the new Orlando Events Center, while allowing participants to network and have a chance to learn about the subcontractor and supplier bid process.

Subsequently, Holmes was introduced to representatives from New Kirk Electric Associates Inc. by the Orlando Magic's MWBE consultant Deloris Batson.

That evening, Holmes said he "hoped to have an opportunity to work on the new arena."

Fast forward to Oct. 21, where Holmes found himself pulling up to the construction site of the community's new Event Center, working as a subcontractor in association with NewKirk Construction.

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"I couldn't ask for a better situation," said Holmes, whose workforce should total about eight minority employees. "At the end of the day, when you feel you've given a decent effort, to have an opportunity to work on the project, I feel rewarded."

As a result of construction package No. 1E, Holmes's hope has translated into the largest monetary construction package in True Power's history.

And while work may have been slow for Holmes in recent months, the benevolent-minded electrician was no where near idle. Holmes taught a free, 12-week electrical course at the Dr. J.B. Callahan Neighborhood Center in Parramore. He eventually graduated two students in early September, one of which, Damon Hudson, has been hired by Holmes.

Thanks to course funding from Orlando Magic construction manager Hunt Construction Group and "Education is Cool" Get One, along with the help of Kim Mowatt, manager of the Dr. J.B. Callahan Neighborhood Center, who acquired complimentary course books for all students, Holmes's course was a magnificent success.

"I believe in this old proverb," said Holmes. "That if a person should live on this planet and learn all there is to know and if they fail to teach their neighbor, they've learned nothing. That is something I've always stood beside."

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