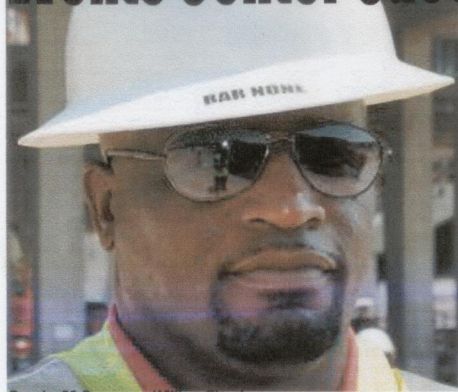




THE ORLANDO ADVOCATE BACK PAGE

June 19, 2009

Events Center Success Story: Brooks 55 Labor Enterprises



Brooks 55 Co-owner, William Floyd

Derrick Brooks, William Floyd and Derrick Alexander understand how important it is to get a break in life.

Their break came on the football field. Former high school standouts, they went on to play for Florida State University and in the National Football League. Both Brooks and Floyd have Super Bowl rings. Alexander is in the Florida State Hall of Fame. All three are in the record books.

They're thankful for the

opportunities they've had in life, including the chance to work hard and succeed.

They know success doesn't always mean headlines and record books. Sometimes it means going to work every day, bringing home a paycheck, and providing for your family — and that's the opportunity the three former football stars are making available today.

Their 3-year-old company, Brooks 55 Labor Enterprises, specializes in placing

temporary workers — from general laborers to skilled tradespeople — on construction projects. The company also provides temps for light industrial work, hospitality, event staffing and disaster recovery services.

Based in Orlando and Tampa, the company is 100 percent minority owned and operated. As of June 1, they will be providing temporary workers for the Orlando Events Center as one of the BLUEPRINT hiring programs. Temporary workers provide unskilled labor to handle one-time requirements such as cleanup or unloading deliveries.

The new Events Center is part of the Orlando Venues initiative, a \$1.1 billion sports, cultural, arts and entertainment project being built in and near downtown Orlando.

"The whole objective is to get the community to work," said Floyd, the firm's sales development manager and the premier fullback of the NFL 1994 draft. He

played for the San Francisco 49ers and the Carolina Panthers and retired in 2000 after a severe knee injury.

"We believe in getting people to work. That's what we do."

Putting Parramore residents on a payroll is a cornerstone of the BLUEPRINT, the plan developed by Mayor Buddy Dyer and District 5 Commissioner Daisy Lynum to ensure that the Venues project has a positive economic impact on the community in which it is being built.

"The jobs available through the Venues project are exactly the kind we're trying to encourage," Mayor Dyer said. "These jobs provide an opportunity to develop a skill set that will lead to long-term employment opportunities, especially in these difficult economic times."

Alex Martins, Chief Operating Officer for the Orlando Magic, agrees. "The team is committed to the BLUEPRINT program that will educate, develop,

and economically empower minority and women-owned companies such as Brooks 55 that, in turn, creates jobs and opportunities for those who are often disenfranchised."

The BLUEPRINT also contains guidelines for hiring ex-offenders and the homeless.

Brooks 55 knows the population from which it hires.

"We're dealing with second chances," Floyd said.

Some applicants are people without many skills. Others are former felons. Still others, he said, are people who have been laid off or mothers trying to support their children.

The firm provides workers for a variety of projects, sending out anywhere from two to 25 people at a time, he said. On the Events Center, Brooks 55 could potentially give hundreds of people a week the opportunity to work.

Getting the job is only part of the equation. People also have to show initiative

and help themselves, said Floyd, including working hard and getting hired on as a permanent employee.

As celebrities, he said, "We see a lot of people with their hands out. "We want to give people the opportunity to develop their talents and to make a life for themselves."

The Brooks 55 founders also give back to the community in other ways well through charities and scholarships.

For example, Brooks — who played 14 years with the Buccaneers — is well known for his charity work and advocacy for education. He has donated thousands of dollars to charity and founded charity and youth scholarship foundation.

Helping people find jobs is what these three find satisfaction from these days.

As Floyd put it, "This is the way we see that we can make a difference."

BLUEPRINT Orlando: 70 Jobs and Counting

Daniel Turner figures there's not much he doesn't know about painting.

He's been doing it for 20 years — working on the Orange County Convention Center, the Boardwalk at Walt Disney World, the Tower of Terror thrill ride, the upscale neighborhood of Bella Collina and other local landmarks. Then for two years, he worked for a sign company, traveling around the country as part of a crew changing all of the Eckerd's drug stores into CVS stores.

And he's versatile.

"As a painter," he said, "you have to know a little carpentry, a little drywall, a little everything."

But after his wife died about a year ago, the 42-year-old Turner returned to Orlando and found himself

in a tough financial fix. Out of work, he had to apply for food stamps. And without a place to stay, he had to ask his first wife to rent him a room in her Orlando home.

The food stamp application came with a stipulation: look for a job. That led him to the BLUEPRINT Employment Office in Parramore and a full-time job as a drywall framer trainee with Kenpat, a commercial drywall and ceiling contractor working on Orlando's new Events Center. The Events Center is part of the Orlando Venues initiative, a \$1.1 billion sports, cultural, arts and entertainment project, being built in and near Downtown Orlando.

Turner is one of about 70 job-seekers to secure Venues employment between mid-February, when the City as-

sumed responsibility for the BLUEPRINT Employment Office, and early May.

He's among the job-seekers targeted by the BLUEPRINT initiative, the program developed by Mayor Buddy Dyer and District 5 Commissioner Daisy Lynum to ensure that the project has a direct, positive economic impact on Central Florida.

An integral part of the vision for the Parramore neighborhood, the BLUEPRINT sets guidelines and standards for jobs and training opportunities for targeted populations, including Parramore residents, the homeless and ex-offenders as well as contracting opportunities for minority and women-owned businesses (M/WBES).

Alex Martins, Chief Operating Officer for the Or-

lando Magic, said, "The team is committed to working with government officials and community leaders to ensure economic opportunity for both M/WBES and individuals like Daniel Turner. We're also committed to ensuring that these economic opportunities will continue after the Events Center is completed."

BLUEPRINT Employment Office numbers indicate that of the Venues jobs placed from February to May 2009, 32 of them came from the targeted populations: 16 Parramore residents, 13 ex-offenders and three homeless individuals.

Turner's life situation doesn't slow him down, dampen his positive outlook or diminish his faith.

"I'm blessed and happy to be working for Kenpat,"

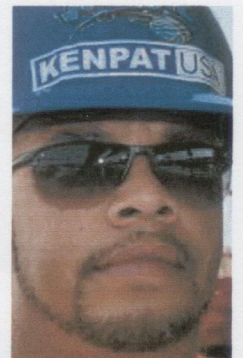
Turner said.

He's been on the job since mid-April, doing a variety of tasks in addition to drywall, including basic laborer duties. He expects to have the job until the building is completed in late 2010.

Satisfied with the work, Turner says he has good bosses, makes decent money and his co-workers "are not only good co-workers, they're good teachers."

Turner was actually up for a position as a foreman, but he chose the trainee job instead because it gave him the opportunity to develop additional skills.

In addition to drywall, "they're teaching me things I already know, but they're teaching me their way, which is probably the right way," he says. Turner's also learning



how to read blueprints and do framing and finishing work.

The way he figures it, he'll be able to take his new skills to his next position, whatever that may be. Or perhaps he might go into business for himself.

After all, Turner observes, people like to add rooms onto their homes. He figures a guy who can do carpentry and drywall will be in demand. And with his painting know-how, Turner could complete the whole project himself.