GLASS & METAL ALLIANCE

SPOTLIGHT

2021 Apprentice Graduation

36 INDIVIDUALS EARN DEGREES AND BECOME MECHANICS

INTRODUCTION

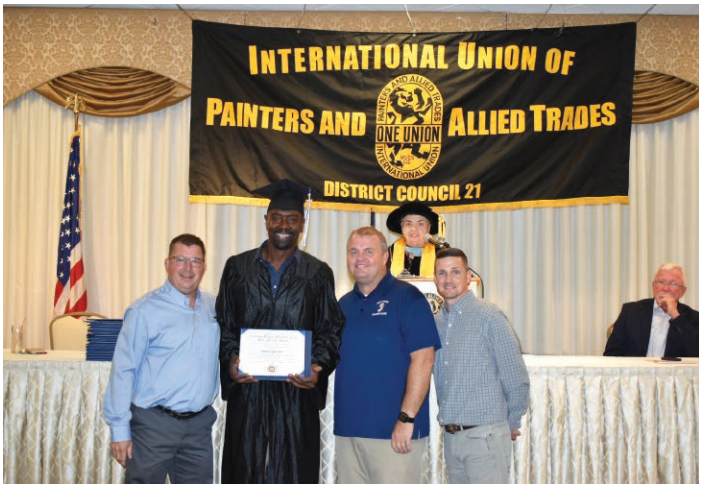
The Finishing Trades Institute of the Mid-Atlantic Region (FTI) is dedicated to creating a highly skilled, educated, and safe workforce built on quality, pride, and progressive training. FTI is the official training provider of District Council 21 (DC21) apprenticeships and is recognized as an accredited institution within the Pennsylvania Department of Education (DOE) and Council of Occupational Education (COE), the first stand-alone building trades apprenticeship program in North America to earn this status. Apprenticeship certification programs prepare apprentices to become valuable mechanics with the skills and education to meet present and future industry demands.

RIGOROUS TRAINING

Glazier apprentices undergo a rigorous program of 60 credit hours. Apprentices learn all aspects of the glazing industry, from advanced safety techniques to sealant theory and application. The apprenticeship program integrates academic competencies including applied math and written communication with skills competencies including welding certification and basic glass fabrication to assure mastery of the trade. Students must complete required courses with a minimum of a C and a minimum of 6,000 on-the-job learning hours to graduate. All apprentices must be able to construct a curtainwall section that passes air and water tests, demonstrating their ability to build and identify points of failure. At the end of the program, glazier apprentices receive BOTH an apprenticeship certificate AND an accredited Specialized Technology in Glazing associate degree.

CLASS OF 2021

October 4 marked the graduation of 36 members of the class of 2021. The group includes five minorities, one female, and two individuals who represent the LGBTQ+ community. Each apprentice began his or her training with a leadership and communication course to support safe and productive work environments; earned first aid and CPR certifications; earned OSHA 10 and 30 credentials; and earned scaffold user, erector, and dismantle certificates. Foundational courses in stick welding will enable graduates to continue with metal inert gas (MIG) and tungsten inert gas (TIG) welding training as mechanics. They have also begun training for future CCO certification for crane and load-handling equipment.



Front: Class of 2021; Luke Tynan, who was injured during his apprenticeship (pictured center in wheelchair) earned honorary mechanic status. Above left: Happy graduates Kevin Hopkins, Gianna Branda, DJ Reilly, Travis Hummell, Sherman Harris, Dan Aviles; Above right: Joe McGee, Maurice Osborne, Mike Laughlin, Steve Metzger, and Joe Ashdale

MY BROTHER'S KEEPER

Maurice Osborne delivered the graduation speech. The glazier with GMI Contractors, Inc. spent several years in various jobs – from selling insurance and bartending to working in a law firm – before deciding to pursue a career that would keep him active and provide opportunities to grow. He had zero construction experience when he began the program and was decidedly "green." He remembers the first week of training when some fellow classmates with glazing or other construction experience snickered at the basic topics being covered. For Maurice, it was all a welcome chance to learn. "I owe a lot to the step-by-step process," he explained. "I'm confident when I step on the job site because I was so well prepared by the training center."

Maurice pulled from his favorite movie, the 1991 crime thriller New Jack City, when he crafted his graduation speech. The movie's gang asked its members, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' to which other members would reply, 'Yes, I am.' The idea that a group of individuals has each other's backs and takes responsibility for their safety, well-being, sanity, and success is critical to Maurice's perception of his fellow LU252 members and his apprentice class in particular.

This mentality goes beyond checking to see if your fellow glaziers have the correct safety equipment or tools and extends to whether they've had enough to eat that day or if their shoes have holes. "We're all in this together," he says. "Do what you can, whenever you can. I'm proud of what we do and what makes us glaziers special. When you are with us, then you are never alone."

AN OPEN MIND

Graduate D.J. Reilly also came into the program "pretty green." D.J. admits he didn't spend much time learning about glazing until he began the apprenticeship program. "I was interested in getting involved in something where I could use my hands," D.J. explained. "I didn't want to sit behind a desk, and I wanted to provide a good living. Glazing felt like a natural fit." He liked the apprenticeship program's opportunity to learn how to do many different things within the trade and feels like he has been well-prepared for his future with "top-notch training." D.J. also described his fellow graduates as a supportive and fantastic group of people. As one of the LGBTQ+ graduates, D.J. came out during his second year. "Everyone was very accepting," he said. "I never felt ostracized. I was still valued as a glazier. My apprentice class and everyone at FTI are great and accepting." He brings those feelings of camaraderie, acceptance, and thorough training to his role as a mechanic at Reilly Glazing, Inc., where he recently had the opportunity to lead projects as a foreman.

SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY

A supportive construction community was on hand to celebrate with the graduates and will be there to shape their futures. Nancy O'Connell Gentile, Ed.D, guest of FTI, conferred the degrees. FTI leadership in attendance included Glazier Coordinator Joe McGee, Glazier Instructor Steve Metzger, and OTHERS. South Jersey Building Trades President Michael Laughlin, DC21 Business Manager Joseph Ashdale, LU252 Business Representative Ed Paley, Architectural Glass & Metal Association (AGMA) Executive Director Lisa Godlewski, FTI trustee and member of the Glazier Advisory Committee Joe Clabbers of National Glass & Metal Co., and representatives from the Pennsylvania Department of Labor were also in attendance.