

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **SMACNA Western Pennsylvania and SMART Local 12 Create Peer-Focused Video to Beat COVID Restrictions on Face to Face Recruitment**

The pandemic strikes again, putting a damper on trades recruitment initiatives with the face-to-face job fairs and school presentations on hold for the foreseeable future. However, the strong partnership between International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers (SMART) Local 12 and the Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contractors' National Association (SMACNA) Western Pennsylvania leveraged a recruitment video project that is gaining attention on social media.

In the video, Joshua Moore, coordinator, apprenticeships and training at Local 12, says for someone who is looking for an alternative to college, the sheet metal industry is a great environment.

“You get to work with your hands and be out in the field and in the shops and you are debt free,” he says. “Through our apprenticeship program, you actually learn 49 college credits, and as you go to school, you are getting paid.”

Local 12 offers a concentrated training program in which apprentices spend five weeks per year and are working the rest of the time.

“Throughout that five years, we start off with teaching math, drafting, AutoCAD, welding, and testing and balancing skills,” Moore says. “We need dependable, reliable individuals. Everything else will come.”

The recruitment video idea came from the apprenticeship committee jointly funded and operated by SMACNA Western Pennsylvania and Local 12.

“We needed an avenue to get our story out to potential recruits,” says SMACNA Western Pennsylvania Executive Director James Strother. “One of the committee members participated in a similar video for a local Building Trades group and showed the final product at a meeting. We decided to put together a similar video but use current or recently graduated apprentices to discuss their experiences. We thought a potential applicant would be more likely to appreciate the situation of someone of a similar age than someone who has been in the trade for a long time.”

When Jayonto Jackson started as an apprentice with Local 12, he knew very little about the trade. “I stayed open minded and willing to learn, and the guys appreciate that,” he says in the video. “If they see you have that hunger and that desire to want to learn, they ride with that and you learn a lot.”

Local 12 Business Manager Greg Blose says Local 12 and SMACNA Western Pennsylvania have an excellent relationship that makes it easier to communicate and get things—like the video project—done.

“That might be something like implementing a new program or acquiring a piece of equipment for the training center,” he says. “It is easy to call up the trustees and talk with them.”

To create the video, the joint training committee went to the trustees of the Journeyman Apprenticeship Training Fund and Labor Management Cooperation Trust Fund for funding.

“The trustees approved the project and we were shooting video a couple weeks later at our training center and on a jobsite in downtown Pittsburgh,” Strother says. “The cost of the video production was split between the two entities so neither had to take a major hit to their budget.”

Blose is proud of the joint projects the organizations have tackled together, including new training programs, government lobbies, applying for state grants, and staying abreast of new market opportunities in the sheet metal industry.

Collectively, the organizations have successfully lobbied for fire life safety legislation in Pennsylvania and earned more than \$2 million in grants that went towards a new training center and equipment.

“The leadership of both organizations realize that we have a mutual need for each other and have respect for each other,” Strother says. “Communication and the willingness to listen and give consideration to the other party is the key to building a good relationship.”

Blose agrees, noting that the first step is realizing that to be successful, parties must agree that teamwork is the best way.

“It is always beneficial to check the egos at the door,” he says. “Having that many people involved who acknowledge that the best way to get things done is to work together is absolutely priceless.”

Tabatha Oden, apprentice at Local 12, never thought while she was going through high school that she would eventually become a tradesperson. “The greatest thing about it is if you don’t like what you are doing, there are many other branches for you to look into and gain knowledge,” she says. “It is a great opportunity for anyone, and I would not change my decision to join the union. I think it is one of the best decisions I have ever made.”

Besides a competitive starting wage union membership includes health, dental and vision benefits, pension, and a vacation fund.

Local 12’s recruitment video has been sent to guidance counsellors, technical schools, and private classes. It can be viewed on social media at [twitter.com/SMLocal12](https://twitter.com/SMLocal12) | [facebook.com/SMWIA12](https://facebook.com/SMWIA12)

Local 12 is accepting apprenticeship applications now. For more information or to request an application please call the training center at 412-828-1386 or visit [smlocal12.org](http://smlocal12.org).

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The International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers (SMART) and the Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contractors’ National Association (SMACNA) have a labor management partnership that is more than 75 years old. The goal of these Partners in Progress is to maintain an effective cooperative effort that demonstrates their expertise in the heating ventilating and

air conditioning (HVAC), architectural metal, and industrial sheet metal markets. For additional information, visit [pinp.org](http://pinp.org).