

# Newark dons a 'green collar' with construction training program

Tuesday, January 13, 2009

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Eight years on the job haven't helped Kendall Ellington pull his Newark construction business out of an economic slump.

Now, with homeowners wanting to save on energy costs, Ellington enrolled in a training program that showed him the best way to get some green was to go green.

"We were pretty wasteful before, without a doubt. We'd throw away materials. Buy over, buy under, use a lot of trial and error. Now, we're saving energy, doing the job the correct way, across the board," the 42-year-old Ellington said as he went to work yesterday on the first of 30 homes being winterized in the program.

The contractor was among 15 people to complete the six-week training program that focuses on improving environmental quality and reducing waste and was sponsored by the city, Laborers' International Union of North America and Garden State Alliance for a New Economy.

Funding for the training came from an \$85,000 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services grant, and \$10,000 for materials to winterize the participating homes came from the laborers' union. The homes are owned by senior citizens who applied for assistance through a city home-repair program.

Newark is the first city to bring environmentally conscious construction, or "green collar work," to New Jersey, said Randall Solomon, executive director of the New Jersey Sustainable State Institute at Rutgers University. The approach has been used in other cities over the past five years.

Solomon said Newark was taking the lead in the state's green collar movement, and other cities may follow with President-elect Barack Obama's commitment to a new economic stimulus package and the creation of a national green infrastructure.

"It's entirely possible that we might see a lot more of this in the future," he said.

Newark Mayor Cory Booker said at a news conference yesterday his administration backed the program to help save the environment, reduce the city's carbon footprint and tackle high unemployment with training that provides work opportunities.

Booker said he was an admirer of Van Jones, an Oakland environmental and civil rights advocate who is credited with helping to start the green collar movement.

"A program like this is great, just because it's helping so many Newark residents save money," the mayor said. "It's really important for me, that all of Newark, including City Hall and the city's schools, begin to save the incredible expense it takes to heat buildings and cool them as well."

Booker said an energy audit under way is targeting public buildings and other city properties to determine how to make them more efficient.

The 15 trainees in the program will be sworn into the laborers union Local 55 today, city officials said. The local is converting a former car wash on Wilson Street into a union hall and venue for additional training.

Donald Howard, director of the union's New Jersey Building Laborers Training and Apprenticeship Fund, said another 25 Newarkers will be trained this winter. The training, he said, teaches general construction skills for jobs starting at \$15 an hour, and the mindset required for green construction.

"It's something we should have been doing since the industrial revolution," Howard said.

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