

# Workshop provides bonding education, other business guidance for small contractors

NAMC-Oregon recently partnered with the Northwest Small Business Transportation Resource Center, the U.S. Commerce Department's Minority Business Development Center and the Metropolitan Contractor Improvement Partnership (MCIP) to host a three-day workshop titled "Bonding Education Program To Grow Your Business."

The workshop, held Jan. 22 and 29-30 at MCIP's office in Northeast Portland, was designed to help minority- and women-owned small and emerging contractors and consultants in the transportation field who are seeking to increase their business capacity and run their operation more effectively.

The Bonding Education Program (BEP) is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Small Business Transportation Resource Center to help small contractors and consultants become bond ready. The BEP consists of

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**Above:** Don Shanklin. **Right:** Lily Keeffe (left) and Linda Lee Womack.  
**Photos by:** John Jackley, MCIP Board Member.



### Member Spotlight:



**U&M Construction**

### Inside NAMC-OR

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### Member Spotlight:



**Twirl Advertising and Design**

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classes to address what businesses need to do to become bond ready and includes a session with local surety bonding professionals to help assemble the materials necessary for a complete bond application.

Workshop sessions included business planning, bonding and insurance essentials, contract law, understanding overhead costs, bid estimate overview, project management and field operations fundamentals, cash flow and financial statements, and bookkeeping fundamentals. Participants, who earned two Oregon CCB continuing education credits for attending, also had an opportunity to network with prime contractors, project owners and small business resource providers.

David Avalos, director of operations for AZ Homes Inc., learned about the workshop from NAMC-Oregon and said the knowledge he gained was worth taking a few days off from work.

"I am so glad I invested the time because, although we know we're contractors, they really highlighted the fact that we are contractors, meaning we need to not be so focused on the work that we don't pay atten-



Daryl Knox, a partner with Aldrich CPAs + Advisors, discusses surety adjustments. (John Jackley/MCIP Board Member)

tion to the contract," he said. "Bonding and insurance are so important and the workshop really drove that home for me."

And, while Avalos already had insurance before the workshop, he said he appreciated an overview from a professional to ensure he has everything properly in order.

"Becoming bondable is a real challenge

for many small and disadvantaged businesses," said workshop facilitator Alan Beane, owner and president of GeoGrade Constructors LLC. "Becoming bondable or increasing bonding capacity will help these small and disadvantaged businesses maximize opportunities to compete for federal, state and local government contracts where bonding is often a requirement. In turn the federal, state, and local government procurement officials now have more surety bonded businesses to contract with and can also meet any small or disadvantaged program goal requirements as well."

He noted that nearly 25 small business owners attended the workshop and about a third of them applied for bonding at the one-on-one sessions held Jan. 30.

During the workshop, Beane presented on business planning, understanding overhead costs, bidding and estimating, project management and field operations fundamentals. Other presenters included Don Shanklin and Shon DeVries, sales executives with Propel Insurance; Jeremy Vermilyea, construction law attorney with Vermilyea Law PC; Tarrah Adam, partner with Moxie Financial; and Daryl Knox, partner with Aldrich CPAs + Advisors.

MCIP offers services to small businesses, agencies, owners, and general contractors to help build contractor skills, relationships, and meet diversity goals.

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## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: U&M CONSTRUCTION

Monica Ortega has been working in construction for nearly four decades and had wanted to start her company for a long time. Last November, she celebrated the one-year anniversary of her business, U&M Construction LLC.

"I just keep reaching for the stars and contracting is the next step up from putting on your tools," she said.

The journeyman glazier bids labor only and installs glass storefronts, curtainwalls and other projects, primarily in new commercial construction. While her job involves long days and hard work, Ortega said she still continues to enjoy it.

"I love my trade and absolutely love the construction trade. I have a blast on the job site," she said. "The work is hard and the work is dirty, but we're not there for a beauty contest and we just crack each other up. It's been an adventure every day for the last 35 years."

Ortega has five sons, two of whom are ironworkers and three who are glaziers, and her grandson is an apprentice. The U&M in her company name stands for Uriah & Monica; Uriah is one of her sons and her partner in the business.

"I have a workforce I can trust and for me that's huge," she said.

She noted that NAMC-Oregon's support has been crucial as she established her own business.

"NAMC-Oregon actually saved me because I do not have access to blueprints because my budget is extremely limited. They have all of the blueprints so I can just go to their office. Without that I would not be able to bid on jobs," Ortega said. "They have gone above and beyond to help me. I really appreciate that."

She added that her network of fellow women in construction also has been essential and she enjoys talking with them whenever possible about their work experiences.

**"NAMC-Oregon actually saved me because I do not have access to blueprints because my budget is extremely limited. They have all of the blueprints so I can just go to their office."**

MONICA ORTEGA  
journeyman glazier,  
U&M Construction



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# Albina Construction plays key role in building homes through Pathway 1000 initiative

For Dennis Harris, the Pathway 1000 initiative is personal. Harris, owner of Albina Construction LLC, grew up in North Portland and is excited to see new homes being built and prioritized for families who have been displaced or are at risk of displacement from North and inner Northeast Portland.

"I moved out of my mother's house and moved to the other side of Unthank Park," Harris said. "I think it's great because the program is designed to bring back minorities who were displaced."

Not only does Harris have a chance to see his community benefit from the initiative, which aims to provide 1,000 new homes for rent and ownership over the course of 10 years, but he also is helping to build them. He and Caitlin MacKenzie, Albina Construction's co-owner and project manager, are working with Portland Community Reinvestment Initiatives Inc. (PCRI) on several proj-

See **ALBINA**, pg. 8



Dennis Harris with the first construction pre-apprenticeship class from POIC doing a walk-through of Williams Townhomes and answering questions. (NAMC-OR)



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# Portland's 5 Centers for the Arts roof project collaboration to ease pathways for diverse contractors

BY HEATHER BACK, METRO

Several Metro programs are partnering with Portland's 5 Centers for the Arts and the National Association of Minority Contractors to improve equity in contracting outcomes by identifying potential barriers that preclude or discourage certain contractors and subcontractors from submitting proposals on Metro's projects.

The programs, including Metro's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Program, its Procurement Department, its Construction Project Management Office and its Property and Environmental Services Department, are working to ensure minority contractors have better access to contracts that qualify through the Oregon Certification Office for Business Inclusion and Diversity, or COBID.

"Our goal is to level the playing field by providing certified firms a fair opportunity to compete for our government contracts regardless of owner ethnicity, gender, disability, or firm size," said Nyla Moore, Metro's

**"Our goal is to level the playing field by providing certified firms a fair opportunity to compete for our government contracts regardless of owner ethnicity, gender, disability, or firm size."**

NYLA MOORE

*Metro's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion training and leadership coordinator*

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion training and leadership coordinator.

Moore and the Construction Project Management Office team shared National Association of Minority Contractors' input with Metro's procurement team. These process improvements were shared with Metro Council, the acting Local Contract Review Board, who ultimately approved the request for an alternate procurement of the Hatfield Hall roof project, resulting in a qualifications-based selection.

"This process enables us to evaluate proposers based on their COBID status, COBID partnerships, workforce participation and development plans and other equity initiatives which are key opportunities identified by NAMC. It also provides us with an opportunity to evaluate each step of our process as the project moves forward instead of taking a look back after the project is completed," said Julie Bunker, Portland's 5 director of operations.

With the approval to raise the sheltered market threshold for subcontract work from \$50,000 to \$100,000, Bunker says, the change means the general contractor can move the needle in terms of providing more and better opportunities for participation by COBID contractors and subs in alignment with Metro's Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

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## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: TWIRL ADVERTISING AND DESIGN

Jennie Rodriguez had worked in advertising and design in Chicago for about 15 years, gaining experience in ad agencies, design studios and a publishing company, when she decided she needed to focus on something more important than her career.

"My best friend, Teresa Gomez-Harris, was diagnosed with breast cancer," she said. "I thought I was going to take six months off, spend time with my friend and help her through that process. She was a pretty awesome person and I was happy I took that time off."

Former colleagues began asking Rodriguez to do some freelance work and, before passing away, Gomez-Harris, an entrepreneur herself, suggested Rodriguez start her own company. She established her company, Twirl, in 1999 and Gomez-Harris was instrumental in helping her name it.

"I wanted a business name that was a little bit ambiguous which didn't include my surname, like most agencies at that time. Our industry is always evolving and revolving with a new spin, and we thought Twirl was fun and represented the movement and energy of the industry," Rodriguez said, adding the firm's tagline is "Strategically Creative."

Victor Echevarria joined Twirl in 2006, bringing experience from working in True Value's communications department as a graphic designer and production specialist. He was laid off but True Value hired him back as a freelance art director to help develop its internal and external marketing materials in 1999. Echevarria met Rodriguez in 2003 and the pair hit it off personally. Three years later, they decided to become professional partners as well and split their time between Chicago and Portland.

Now based in Portland full time, Twirl specializes in developing product and service brands for entrepreneurs and small businesses - including several construction companies - government agencies, Fortune 500 clients and nonprofits. Its services include a full spectrum of branding and marketing communication solutions, along with Word-Press website design, development, hosting and maintenance and photography.

Echevarria said he enjoys partnering with business leaders to overcome obstacles and succeed in their creative endeavors, noting that Twirl's status as a small firm means he and Rodriguez share many of the same rewards and challenges their clients face.

"For me, the greatest joy is creating something from scratch and giving it new life. From our point of view, it's about instilling confidence, providing value and building

trust," he said.

Rodriguez added that she loves the variety her work offers. "It's great to be able to learn about all these different industries, and that's been something that I truly enjoy."

Over the years, Rodriguez has gained her own confidence as a woman business owner and appreciates the opportunity to network with other entrepreneurs through NAMC-Oregon.

"The connections have been valuable and the people are great," Echevarria added.

Twirl Advertising and Design was named Business Diversity Institute's Minority Business Firm of the Year in 2016 and 2018 BESThq Partner of the Year. The firm is currently the marketing consultant for the Port of Portland Mentor-Protégé Program. Twirl also has garnered several Summit International Creative Awards and Golden Trumpet Awards. To learn more about the firm, please visit [www.twirladvsdesign.com](http://www.twirladvsdesign.com).



Jennie Rodriguez, left, and her husband Victor Echevarria are partners in Twirl Advertising & Design. (Sam Tenney/DJC)



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## Albina Continued from page 4

ects as part of Pathway 1000.

MacKenzie called it a “once-in-a-lifetime opportunity,” and Harris added: “I think the biggest opportunity for me personally is to build houses and I know the people moving into them.”

Harris co-founded Albina Construction in late 2010. He started working in the construction industry in 1990 as an apprentice and union carpenter for Walsh Construction Co. After five years of apprenticeship with Walsh, Harris joined a small firm specializing in custom remodeling. In 2000, he joined Tom Walsh & Co. as a lead carpenter. In 2007, he joined forces with Cityhouse Builders as a superintendent and, upon starting Albina Construction, made the move to owner.

Albina Construction, which provides residential new construction and renovation services with a focus on affordable housing, had worked with PCRI in the past and helped the organization rehabilitate 11 rental homes.

With the encouragement of NAMC-Oregon, Albina Construction put in competitive bids for 11 housing units through the Pathway 1000 initiative and won all 11 contracts. They include four units at the Williams Townhomes, six units in the Blandena Townhomes and a single-family home on a skinny lot along North Arlington Place.

See pg. 3



**Above:** Work continues on the townhomes project. (NAMC-OR)  
**Right:** Williams Townhomes Unit 1 front entry. (NAMC-OR)





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"We're good at small, affordable housing units so it was kind of a natural fit in that regard to help with the townhomes," Harris said. "The biggest challenge is that the townhomes are condos and that's not something we or our subs have done before."

He noted that one of the biggest hurdles for small companies is that liability insurance doesn't cover condos and that PCRI assisted in the effort to obtain liability insurance that covers the entire construction team.

It's been interesting working with some of the smaller firms to make sure they meet the requirements," Harris said. "We're hoping it prepares them to take on bigger jobs as well. If they have higher insurance limits, they can do bigger jobs."

Julia Metz, PCRI's housing developer, said the Pathway 1000 initiative prioritizes working with minority- and women-owned companies to build the projects, and she appreciates the fact that Harris grew up in the community where he is now providing housing on schedule and under budget.

"Albina Construction really is the essence of who we are hoping to work with in terms of the local community-based contractor," Metz said. "They've been a great partner for us in being a part of the community and they are also a great general contractor."



Dennis Harris, owner of Albina Construction LLC, and laborer Sarah Beecroft. (NAMC-OR)



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## Metro-led group looking at issues affecting workforce retention

BY CHUCK SLOTHOWER

[cslothower@djcoregon.com](mailto:cslothower@djcoregon.com)

Months after convening the Construction Career Pathways Project work group, Metro is beginning to forge a path forward to encourage more women and minorities to enter and remain in the building trades.

The effort brings together 16 entities from around the Portland-metro region, including city and county governments, transportation agencies, Oregon Health & Science University and Home Forward.

"In many cases, there are strong programs in place," said Noelle Dobson, equity strategy program analyst for Metro, "and it's a matter of how we might replicate some of those and take them to scale."

Some local governments, including the city of Portland, have instituted equity requirements for major public projects. However, there are not enough minority and women employees for firms to comply, Dobson said.

"It's both a supply and a demand issue," she said. "Even if all agencies had (equity) goals ... right now, the supply is not there to meet that demand."

Retention of minorities and women in the construction industry continues to fall short. The work group is looking at the root causes of low retention, including child care and transportation issues and how workers are treated at job sites.

"The retention rates are not great," Dobson said. "There are issues around jobsite mentoring, jobsite training, jobsite culture. There are issues of harassment, where people say it's not worth it to come to work."

Members of the work group are examining pilot efforts such as Multnomah County's "Green Dot" program at its Central Courthouse project to encourage reporting of harassment.

"How do we address some of these barriers that aren't related to: Are you a good bricklayer? Are you a good electrician?" Dobson said.

There are also efforts at the Hyatt Regency Portland at the Oregon Convention Center project site to help workers. Construction workers face commutes to work sites that change with each project, and challenging hours that create child care obstacles for working parents, Dobson said. Mortenson is serving as general contractor of the 600-room hotel.

A flood of large public projects is expected to create a steady demand for construction workers for the next several years. These include the Southwest Corridor Light Rail project, the Broadway Corridor and the Bull Run filtration plant.



The Hyatt Regency Portland at the Oregon Convention Center. (Josh Kulla/DJC)

The work group identified 81 large public capital projects that will require nearly 14,000 construction workers. Some of the projects have stated apprentice and workforce diversity goals. The goals average 20 percent apprentices, 25 percent minorities and 14

percent women. The Metro-led work group aims to produce formal recommendations at some point this summer.

*This article originally appeared in the Daily Journal of Commerce's Workforce Development focus section in January 2019.*



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## VISION 2020

### Goal 1 - Advocacy & Accountability

#### Objective 1: Set the Advocacy Agenda

- Prioritize legislative agenda (local, state, federal)
- Build lobbying capacity

#### Objective 2: Mobilize Community Support

- Convene a coalition of minority supporters
- Cultivate relationships with key decision makers

#### Objective 3: Issue Report Cards

- Produce and promote NAMC-OR Report Card on DBE incentive set aside programs
- Produce and promote NAMC-OR Report Card for project opportunities and outcomes

#### MISSION:

Advocate and support minority-owned businesses by optimizing participation and providing business development through education and training.

### Goal 2 - Build Member Capacity

#### Objective 1: Provide Technical Assistance and Support Services

- Provide full suite of contractor services (financial, marketing, technological, suppliers, etc.)

#### Objective 2: Contracting Opportunities

- Create ongoing project pipeline report
- Utilize partner organizations to conduct technical assistance trainings and workshops, aligned with MCIP

#### Objective 3: Member Visibility

- Member profiles on NAMC-OR website
- Highlight keystone projects that profile membership



### Goal 3 - Grow and Sustain NAMC-OR

#### Objective 1: Grow Members & Partners

- Establish NAMC-OR Guiding Principles
- Increase NAMC-OR membership by 50% emphasizing existing trade gaps
- Increase NAMC-OR partnerships by 33%

#### Objective 2: Strengthen Leadership

- Convene and maintain NAMC-OR committees (legislative, finance, etc.)
- Build a strong, diverse Board to provide NAMC leadership

#### Objective 3: Diversify Revenue

- Annual NAMC-OR Fundraiser Luncheon
- Expand contracts and fee for service activity
- Annual Tradeshow with MCIP

#### VISION FOR 2020:

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### Contact Us

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