



Commissioner Brad Avakian
Bureau of Labor & Industries

Press Release

For Immediate Distribution

August 29, 2012

CONTACT: Bob Estabrook, 503-709-0730

BOLI begins spotlight series on active Oregon apprentices

First in the series: Laborer Liz Stewart

PORTLAND- The Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI), home of the state's Apprenticeship and Training Division, is launching a special series of spotlight articles on registered apprentices—workers earning living wages while learning the skills for a career in their chosen trade. The Apprenticeship and Training Division monitors all registered apprenticeship programs in the state to ensure maintenance of standards and to promote participation by women and people of color.

Apprentice Spotlight: Liz Stewart

Working on the Block 49 Project, what will be “Gray’s Landing” on Portland’s South Waterfront, is an upbeat, 26-year-old laborer apprentice named Liz Stewart. She’s already had 1.5 yards of concrete dumped on her on this job, which would dampen the spirits of a lot of Oregonians, but not Liz. “I still feel really lucky,” she says with a grin.

That lucky feeling goes beyond just escaping concrete: Liz found a job that she really enjoys. And it came along when she really needed it.

When her Oregon National Guard unit returned from a tour in Iraq, Liz remembers that jobs felt really scarce. So when the laborers union came to a reintegration event talking about career opportunities, it was a no-brainer for her and several of her comrades.

“I always kind of knew that apprenticeship was out there,” Liz says. “My uncle is an electrician, and I had a middle school shop class, but BOLI’s latest outreach efforts might have gotten me on the right path sooner. When I sat down and really looked at the information, I was sold.”

Liz, who had done some non-union laborer work after high school, came into her apprenticeship ready to work hard. She’s seen some other apprentices who became disillusioned at not working all the time, but feels like her steady work is a product of putting in the effort to make sure an employer knows you can get the job done.

The lucky feeling extends to Liz’s whole apprenticeship experience. She’s a big fan of the laborers union and is especially thankful for the support of Aida Aranda, the Laborers’

Apprenticeship Coordinator that helps keep young apprentices on track to succeed. Her experience on the Block 49 Project has been great, leading to positive reviews for her bosses from Walsh and RDF Construction.

Where would Liz be now if not for apprenticeship? “Probably working at Subway,” she says without hesitating. And then another grin.

It’s easy to get the sense that Liz's positive attitude would make her successful on other paths as well. But there's no denying the happy intensity as, just a couple of weeks from third term in her apprenticeship, the Hillsboro High School grad sums up her path to apprenticeship in Oregon: "I feel lucky. I'm really glad I've had the opportunity."

#####

Visit www.oregon.gov/BOLI for more information about all of BOLI’s work to support employers, the workforce and a stronger economy.

The mission of the Bureau of Labor and Industries is to protect employment rights, advance employment opportunities, and protect access to housing and public accommodations free from discrimination.