

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

by Charley Meeks-Crystle and Georgeta Lazar Wainwright

Delaware Elevator implements numerous initiatives to prepare for the future.



Carroll with his CET mentors, Frank Giampa Jr. and Jody Howard

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Workforce development is a critical issue that is of paramount concern within the elevator industry, as the workforce is rapidly aging and the pipeline of new talent entering the field is insufficient. Despite the abundance of lucrative trade jobs and apprenticeship opportunities available in local communities, high schools have traditionally channeled students almost exclusively toward four-year university programs, neglecting to provide adequate exposure and access to the vast array of skilled, hands-on career paths that do not require a traditional college degree.

Recognizing this trend, Delaware Elevator has taken a bold and proactive stance, committed to empowering the next generation of elevator technicians and mechanics. Not only has the company established a comprehensive Youth Apprenticeship Program to provide aspiring students with invaluable on-the-job training and mentorship, but it has also made it its mission to elevate the visibility and appeal of the elevator industry within the local community by introducing elementary and middle school students to the marvels of elevator technology and design through a partnership with Junior Achievement. Through these concerted efforts, Delaware Elevator is working to shatter outdated stigmas, ignite passion for the elevator trade and cultivate a robust, skilled workforce that will sustain the industry and Delaware Elevator’s fourth-generation family business for years to come.

In May 2024, Delaware Elevator reached an important milestone – one that was the culmination of years of unwavering commitment to its innovative Youth Apprenticeship Program. After dedicating tremendous time and effort to cultivating this unique educational pathway, the company celebrated the graduation of its very first Maryland State-Registered Youth Apprentice, Cameron Carroll, a standout student from Wicomico High School. Through the Youth Apprenticeship Program, Carroll gained invaluable hands-on experience and a solid foundation of technical skills, all while earning credits toward his high school diploma. Now, with his youth apprenticeship successfully completed, Carroll will seamlessly transition into the Certified Elevator Technician Apprenticeship Program, jointly administered by Delaware Elevator, the National Association of Elevator Contractors and the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation.

This remarkable achievement serves as a shining example of the power of apprenticeship to transform lives and create clear, accessible routes to rewarding, in-demand careers. For Carroll, the Youth Apprenticeship Program has been the key that has unlocked a future filled with boundless opportunity, as he continues his journey toward becoming a skilled, credentialed professional within the elevator industry. Delaware Elevator’s pioneering work in this space has not only benefited Carroll, but has also paved the way for countless other



Delaware Elevator JA Storefront during live simulation

young people to follow in his footsteps, discovering the immense value of apprenticeship-based learning.

The Delaware Elevator team has much to be grateful for, especially its partnership with Alison Cornish, the Career and Technology Education Workplace coordinator for Wicomico County Public Schools. It was through Cornish's guidance that Carroll was connected with the Delaware Elevator Youth Apprenticeship program in fall 2022 when he was just a junior at Wicomico High School. Carroll eagerly embraced the opportunity, diving headfirst into the program in October of that year. After completing the crucial safety training orientation and earning his OSHA 30 certification, Carroll was able to put his newfound knowledge to the test, working alongside the experienced construction crews on a major local project – The Ross Building in Salisbury, Maryland.

Carroll's mentors on the job site were seasoned elevator technicians, one being Daniel Jones, with more than 13 years in the field. Initially, Jones admitted to being a bit apprehensive about having such a young apprentice on a complex construction project. However, he soon recognized the immense value that Carroll's enthusiasm and eagerness to learn could bring, allowing him to gain invaluable on-site experience installing the building's one eight-stop basement traction elevator and two 14-stop overhead traction elevators. Jones highlighted the unique technological savvy that today's youth apprentices can offer; with their familiarity with the latest computer programs and IT systems, their knowledge is essential to modern elevator operations. He was delighted to have Carroll prove this theory.

After completing work on The Ross Building, Carroll transitioned to Delaware Elevator's Service Department, where he learned from experienced Certified Elevator Technician (CET) Jody Howard. Howard stressed that a willingness to learn and ask questions, combined with a keen attention to detail, are



Chad Prettyman, DEI's New Construction/Mod Field Ops Training manager, testing the welding simulator from Miller

vital qualities for any aspiring elevator technician. The advice from seasoned mentors is clear: Youth apprentices like Carroll must be ready to work hard, soak up knowledge at every turn and never hesitate to seek guidance from those who have paved the way before them. With this mindset, the future of the elevator industry looks brighter than ever.

Along with Carroll's great achievements, Delaware Elevator has been steadfastly paving the way for students in Maryland, Delaware and Virginia, actively participating in a variety of youth outreach initiatives and presentations at numerous local high schools and technical institutions. The company has recognized a prevalent thirst among students for alternatives to the traditional college path, and its efforts reflect a concerted drive to expose young people to the myriad career opportunities available within the elevator industry. This commitment is underscored by the significant rise in registered youth apprenticeship programs throughout Maryland, a clear indicator of the real and growing need for such options.

Notably, Delaware Elevator has carved out a distinguished role for itself within the esteemed Junior Achievement (JA) nonprofit association. Since 2019, the company has been a consistent participant in JA's annual Inspire event, which draws thousands of students to a local convention center where they can explore a wide range of career paths available in their own Eastern Shore communities. After five years of successful involvement in this impactful program, Delaware Elevator's dedication to its local community only deepened. When JA approached the company in 2023 to open a storefront within the JA Perdue Henson Center, the team eagerly seized the opportunity to further cement its role as a trailblazer in youth outreach and education.

Now, the company's immersive storefront in the JA Center offers a unique, hands-on experience for up to 10,000 students each year. Visitors are guided through simulated careers ranging from CEO and CFO to welder, engineer, sales representative and elevator mechanic, complete with a donated Nano Elevator from ELEVATOR WORLD, a full DEM Elevating Equipment Residential Cab with an operational gate and lighting, and an augmented reality welding simulator provided by Miller Welds. This dynamic, interactive display underscores Delaware Elevator's unwavering commitment to inspiring the next generation of industry professionals and empowering

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young people to explore the diverse pathways available to them beyond the traditional college track.

Student career paths are of top concern for Delaware Elevator, but we would be remiss to not mention the company's commitment to honoring those who have served our country. As many know, choosing to forgo college or a trade in favor of military service is an immensely challenging decision; one that requires courage, sacrifice and selflessness. Delaware Elevator recognizes the incredible value that these heroic individuals bring to the workforce, and has taken proactive steps to ensure that veterans have every opportunity to transition into a rewarding new career in the elevator industry, if interested. Delaware Elevator has partnered with the GI Bill, a landmark piece of legislation that has long provided vital educational and vocational benefits to America's military veterans.

Through this partnership, Delaware Elevator has been VALOR-approved for use within GI Bill apprenticeship programs, opening a whole new world of possibility for those who have bravely answered the call to serve. This means that veterans interested in pursuing a career in the elevator industry can utilize their hard-earned GI Bill funds to supplement their on-the-job training and classroom instruction as they work toward earning their industry certifications to embark on a rewarding new path.

This development represents an exciting convergence of pro-veteran policies, industry-leading training programs and the steadfast determination of those who have sacrificed so much in service of their country. By providing veterans with the resources and support they need to succeed in the skilled trades, Delaware Elevator is honoring their service and investing in the long-term prosperity of its local community and the nation. It is a testament to the company's unwavering commitment to those who have worn the uniform, and a shining example of how businesses can play a vital role in empowering our nation's heroes.

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Charley Meeks-Crystle at JA Inspire with students



Charley Meeks-Crystle presenting elevator careers to Delmar High School students



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