

CONTACT:
[Leslie Horna](#), [WORKNOW](#), 303.523.1978

Local Construction Hiring Brings Joy and Jobs to Denver This Holiday Season

This holiday season, 26-year-old DeShawn Marion is thankful for his freedom and a good meal. To spend one of his first paychecks and celebrate his new job, Marion went out to a nice steak dinner. He'd dreamed about this moment for months, years even. The meal provided more than nourishment and fulfillment. It reminded Marion that he's "doing the right thing."

As a young adult, Marion was attracted to construction work and often helped on flooring, tile, and carpet projects to earn money here and there. His ambitions were set on going to college to study forensic science.

Before Marion could go to college, he wound up serving over four years in prison for a felony charge. It was in prison that Marion was reintroduced to construction. He participated in a heavy equipment operation program where prisoners were taught to operate bulldozers, excavators, back-hoes, and other large machinery with real, hands-on experience. Marion's sentence was reduced as a result of his good behavior. Upon release, Marion was introduced to WORKNOW at his halfway house. He signed up for the employment platform on the spot and hasn't looked back.

WORKNOW is a local job recruitment, advancement and support platform presented by Colorado Resource (CORE) Partners. CORE is a partnership among leading community organizations advocating for and working to connect men and women in local communities to high-paying jobs. Once individuals enroll with WORKNOW, they become Members and are assigned a Career Navigator who assists them on their pathway to finding, keeping, and advancing their career in construction.

"The collaboration among our CORE Partners enables WORKNOW to best meet the needs of each individual looking for training or advancement assistance," said Jenna Tullberg, WORKNOW Career Navigator. "The better-prepared workers are when they meet a contractor and get on a job site, increases the likelihood they'll get and keep that job."

When Marion started his first construction job, it was his first career job and it wasn't quite what he thought it would be. His first day on the job was fun. Co-workers didn't expect him to know everything. Marion's co-workers took the time to show him what to do and explain why the crew does things a certain way. This warm and accepting welcome was not something Marion expected being new and having a criminal history. He realized this is an opportunity to use the skills he's recently learned while also being open to learning new or alternate ways of doing things.

"This is my first real job. It makes me feel good to be part of something bigger. I made a plan and am working hard for it. It feels real awesome. Amazing."

Marion credits WORKNOW for helping to prepare him for what to expect during the hiring process as well as once he arrived on the job site. WORKNOW provides support services such as, but not limited to childcare, transportation, and the purchase of clothing/boots or tools required for the job. Marion also took advantage of complimentary career counseling offered by the employment platform to create his first resume. He gushed about how helpful the WORKNOW team was and that he's very happy with the results. After all, it earned him his first real job.

WORKNOW offers a variety of free trainings, workshops, networking and mentoring opportunities to its Members. Enrollment in WORKNOW and the services offered are all free of charge thanks to founding and funding partners Gary Community Investments, the Center for Workforce Initiatives at Community College of Denver, the Colorado Department of Transportation, and the City and County of Denver (Office of Economic Development/Denver Workforce Services).

“A goal of WORKNOW is to increase access to established industry resources while also providing the support working families need to find and keep high-paying jobs, improving family self-sufficiency,” said Katrina Wert, Director of the Center for Workforce Initiatives at Community College of Denver. “By covering the cost of work boots or childcare, we empower our Members to build more.”

CORE Partner [Construction Careers Now](#) regularly provides a 4-week Introduction to Construction curriculum, the same course Marion took after signing up for WORKNOW. He liked the class so much that he’s encouraged his nieces, nephews, and brother to sign up for the employment platform.

Marion too wants to learn as much as he can to sharpen his skills, advance in the industry, and better support the crew on his job site. As a Laborer with [Colorado Cleanup](#), a Denver metro-based demolition, excavation, and environmental earthwork company, Marion cleans and maintains the job site to be free of dirt, debris, chemicals, and waste; builds trenches and walls; and directs vehicle and pedestrian traffic. Each day on a job is different and each job is different. Laborers are essential to highway construction, environmental remediation, and building.

“I ask a lot of questions,” said Marion. He hopes his patience and diligence will give him the opportunity to drive an excavator next year for Colorado Cleanup. “The excavator plays a big role on a job and it does a lot of work. I want to do that.”

While excavators are typically used to clear construction sites, his career goals are focused on building more. Marion is constructing a new life for himself and his family. When Marion isn’t working, he can be found playing a mobile game of chess with his Uncle, talking with his Granny, watching basketball, or reading books.

This time with family reminds Marion why work matters. Family is a motivator for him. The most challenging aspect of rebuilding his life is his mindset. Marion has been around criminal activity since he was a young child. After serving his own time in corrections, Marion is working to change his life for the better. To shift his mindset, Marion regularly meditates on what’s bothering him, encouraging himself to think before reacting. Construction work draws on similar skills where workers are often expected to learn new things, to think and plan ahead, and encourages conceptual thinking to transform a building design in your mind into reality.

“I ask myself, ‘is it worth going back to prison?’ said Marion. Instead, he chooses a solutions-oriented approach to talking about problems, focused on listening and communicating better. Leadership at Colorado Cleanup noticed and has been working with Marion to provide additional training and educational opportunities to help him achieve his career goals.

His plans not only include taking on more responsibility with Colorado Cleanup, but to also go back to school for a degree in business and start his own construction company. Marion says he would also like to start working with local youth to “see life beyond their own reality.” He grew up around drugs, shootings, and crime and wants to help kids avoid getting involved in that.

“WORKNOW has helped me in a lot of ways. They offered me a lot of support and [provided] things I needed and couldn’t afford to buy,” said Marion. “Mostly, they opened me up to asking for help.”



PO Box 173363
Denver, CO 80217-3363
[720] 389-0999 **phone**
coreworknow@gmail.com

ColoCorePartners.com

Marion moved into his own apartment last week and continues to work toward his construction career goals. His advice to those interested in exploring a career in construction: "Take it all in and learn as much as you can."

If you want to enroll in WORKNOW, RSVP for an Information Session, call 720-352-6019 or submit an Interest Form online at work-now.org. CORE/WORKNOW believes that YOU matter and can help change the industry and make our community better. Together, we're building more; we're building you.

###