

## Summit Academy graduates ready for Hiway Heavy jobs



FRIDAY, 09 JULY 2010 15:21 |



2010 graduating class with the instructors and administrators from Local 49 and Summit Academy OIC-R - Photo courtesy of Local 49

Summit Academy OIC in partnership with the International Union of Operating Engineers <http://www.local49.org> Local 49 last week graduated the first class of students to participate in their groundbreaking joint heavy equipment operator training program. Workers graduated in ceremonies at the Local 49 Training Center at 40276 Fish Tail Road in Hinckley, MN.

The milestone event is hailed as a payoff for two years of tough negotiating, protesting, planning and countless hours of hard work by SAOIC, HIRE MN advocacy network, union and school administrators and students.

Students spent the first 15 weeks of the 20 week program in classroom instruction at Summit Academy, Olson Highway Campus in North Minneapolis. The last five weeks of the program were spent at the Local 49's state of the art Training Center in Hinckley, operating the equipment that apprentices typically operate when they first enter the industry.

"Becoming an operator requires a lot more than showing up on a job site willing to work," said Gary Lindblad director of training for Local 49. "Operators must have proper training and certification to get in the seat of a dozer, backhoe or crane and work safely and effectively."

"This training is like no other being offered locally, and it gives our students – many with difficult backgrounds and upbringings – the tools they need to succeed," said Louis King, President of SAOIC.

To join this heavy equipment operator program, interested students had to meet requirements that the State of Minnesota has put in place to become a Local 49 registered apprentice, including a high school diploma or GED, and a passing score on the Ramsay Skills Test, which evaluates basic math proficiency.

"Our doors have always been open wide to women and minority community members, but we wanted to go the extra mile to ensure more people knew how to enter Local 49's apprenticeship program," said Glen Johnson, Local 49 business manager. "While many people talk about inclusion and a diverse workplace, we have gone beyond talking, and are taking real action to address this issue in a responsible manner that will benefit the union, the contractors, and members of the community.

"This type of program was long overdue; traditionally men and women raised on the family farm joined Local 49 for a more secure future with better health care and pension benefits. As our state's landscape has changed, we have had to find new ways to recruit new workers interested in a career in our industry," he said.

The graduation at Hinckley follows direct action protests earlier this month by HIRE Minnesota, an environmental and workforce justice advocacy network, founded and led by Louis King, which protested Ames Construction's being awarded more contracts from the State of Minnesota even though it is breaking state laws by failing to comply with hiring statutes.

- [Search](#)

ADVERTISEMENT

We've seen everything. Of course, after 120 years, that's to be expected.

[www.hcmc.org](http://www.hcmc.org) Every Life Matters.™

Hennepin County Medical Center

ISSUE [View the latest issue of Insight News](#)

FEATURED VIDEO

Immigration Reform  
Conversations with Al McFarlane - Video

INSIGHTNEWS.COM / VIDEO

Conversations with Al McFarlane  
PODCAST ARCHIVE

**Business & Community Service Network**

the city inc

Educating...  
Healing...  
Empowering...

[www.thecityinc.org](http://www.thecityinc.org)

**Stairstep Foundation**

Restoring community spirit through faith, discussion and understanding

612-521-3110 [www.stairstep.org](http://www.stairstep.org)  
1404 14th Avenue North, Mpls.

HIRE Minnesota, a coalition of more than 70 community organizations, promotes public investments that can jump-start the economy, provide access for all people to jobs, training and living wages, and that support healthy communities.

HIRE Minnesota protested Ames Construction's unfair hiring practices, and charged the firm has been out of compliance with state law since 2006. HIRE MN said Ames Construction continues to receive major state contracts and is now a finalist to receive Central Corridor Light Rail Transit (LRT) contracts.

Ames Construction has received a number of major state contracts, including being the lead contractor on the \$288 million reconstruction of Highway 62.

Every year since 2006, Ames has been cited for not completing the state's minimum requirements for recruitment of workers of color.

HIRE Minnesota leaders staged the worksite protest at Veterans Memorial Park in Richfield and marched to the Ames-led construction project on Highway 62.

A recent report released by the Economic Policy Institute revealed that Blacks in the Twin Cities are more than three times more likely to be unemployed than whites. Additional reports show the state of Minnesota has the second worst record on both Latino and African-American employment.

HIRE MN said the state aggravates the situation by awarding millions of taxpayer dollars to a contractor that not only fails to meet its minority hiring goals, but repeatedly fails to take the minimum steps required by law to recruit workers of color.

Ames, which is one of the largest general contractors in the nation, has been under a corrective action plan with the Minnesota Department of Transportation for its hiring practices since 2006. And despite year after year of failure, this contractor received one of the largest construction contracts in state history for the Highway 62 project, said HIRE MN.

Ames is one of the top three finalists to receive a contract to build out the \$1 billion Central Corridor LRT line.

"Is the state going to continue to reward Ames Construction for failure, or will the company finally be forced to follow the law?" HIRE MN leaders said in a press release announcing the protest action.

"Minnesotans deserve to know how their tax dollars are being spent. Ames Construction must be held to the same standards as other contractors if the firm wants to continue to profit from our public investments. No more contracts should be awarded to Ames Construction -- or any other contractors -- until they demonstrate a commitment to allowing people of color access to a fair share of the jobs," HIRE MN said.

To see a list of organizations involved in HIRE Minnesota, visit <http://www.hiremn.org>.

---

Please register or login to add your comments to this article.

Ads by Google

#### Forklifting Jobs

Looking for General Warehouse Laborers with Forklift Experience  
[www.SkilledLaborCareer](http://www.SkilledLaborCareer)

#### Find Construction Work

Looking For Construction Jobs? Start Previewing Leads For Free!  
[www.ServiceMagic.com](http://www.ServiceMagic.com)

#### Heavy Equipment School

Experts in Heavy Equipment Operator Training Since 1963. Apply Online!  
[operator-school.com/Equ](http://operator-school.com/Equ)

#### Construction Bidding

Find Commercial Construction Jobs Up for Bid Locally - Subscribe Now!  
[www.ReedConstructionD](http://www.ReedConstructionD)

#### Most Read Articles

- [Know your tax exemption, deduction options](#)
- [Olson Middle School Students Poetry: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.](#)
- [14 year old honor student records tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King](#)
- [Voting justice, voting hope: Progressive faith taking action in 2008](#)
- [Jackson and Sharpton say their activist roles will not change](#)



Summit Academy OIC  
Training for Life. Job placement and training programs serving Twin Cities adults and youth.

(612) 377-0150 [www.saoic.org](http://www.saoic.org)  
935 Olson Memorial Highway, Mpls.

#### Stairstep Foundation

Restoring community spirit through faith, discussion and understanding

(612) 521-3110 [www.stairstep.org](http://www.stairstep.org)  
1404 14th Avenue North, Mpls.