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Summit Academy taking workers from minimum to livable wages



By Jeff Olsen



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Inside Summit Academy's Smart House in north Minneapolis, Linata Pineda is learning to make a new mark in life.

"My husband works in remodeling," Linata said. "So I wanted to join forces with him to create our own company."

A company that Linata says will be able to offer environmentally-friendly, "green" building.

"That's kind of where construction is headed towards," Linata added.

And that's why Linata headed to Summit Academy, a nonprofit educational and vocational training center in Minneapolis.

"Summit has incorporated weatherization training, green collar training is the term that's used, into all of our carpentry pre-apprentice certification training," Carpentry Department Training Manager Gary Courtney said.

Training in green collar building techniques that officials say makes these students more valuable to local construction companies.

"We believe the best social service program in the world is a job," Summit Academy CEO Louis King said.

Tuition for Summit's 20-week courses at about \$4500, but many of the students get help with financial aid and grants. Louis King says Summit's training not only translates into a better job and paycheck, in many cases it's a chance to build a better life. Student Dean Peters is 17 weeks into is training. For him, this is a new start.

"I did two and a half years in a federal prison. I was a white collar worker previously. So this is a total career change in life for me," Peters said.

"And these people rise to the occasion. 75-percent of them finish and 75-percent of them go on to hired in their trades," King added.

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In fact, summit-trained workers have already made a mark on big projects all over town, including TCF Bank Stadium, Target Field and Target Center's new rooftop garden.

In just a few weeks, Linata will be making her mark.

"I'm very excited," she said.

You can get a look at Summit's green building techniques this Saturday, November 7th. Summit Academy is hosting free public tours of its Smart House from 10 a.m. to noon.

[Click here](#) for more information on Summit Academy.

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