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For Immediate Release

David Jeffers

First Story LLC

Phone: 703-717-1712

E-mail: jeffers@firststorypr.com

The Robert and Amy Harper Family Foundation Launches Over \$1 Million in Scholarships and Grants for Construction Skills Training

Home Builders Institute (HBI) Names Building “Harper Family Training Facility” Where it Operates BuildStrong Academy of Orlando

Washington, D.C., March 27, 2023 – Today at a ceremony to unveil the new name of a construction training facility, it was clear the guest of honor, a Florida-based philanthropist, has a singular passion. “Together we must be doing all we can to provide training and education in the construction trades for young people in Florida,” said Robert Harper.

At the BuildStrong Academy of Orlando, Harper announced the Harper Family Foundation’s \$1 Million contribution to Home Builders Institute (HBI) which operates the facility and offers its tuition-free construction training programs. HBI is the nation's leading nonprofit provider of trade skills education for the building industry.

The foundation’s funds will finance scholarships and programs that expand training opportunities for young people in Orlando, throughout Florida and across the country, according to HBI President and CEO Ed Brady.

“Robert Harper’s support of construction skills education for young people is monumental,” Brady said. “That is why we are honored to christen our building The Harper Family Training Facility, where we provide students with hands-on training in the trades.”

In June 2021, HBI opened the BuildStrong Academy where it conducts skill-building classes at no cost to students. The training is designed to take them from beginners with little or no construction skills to tradespeople who are sought after by employers. Instructors use HBI’s curriculum, which is one of only three pre-apprenticeship programs recognized by the U.S. Department of Labor. The instruction is customized to meet the employment needs of local building and construction businesses in different communities.

HBI runs similar initiatives at its other BuildStrong Academies around the country, as well as through 624 other programs in 48 states and Puerto Rico.

“HBI’s most recent Construction Labor Market Report found a nationwide shortage of more than two million skilled construction workers,” said Brady, “To fill the gap requires the kind of commitment Robert Harper stands for every day.”

Harper and children Sean, Robert and Michelle established the family’s foundation to honor Harper’s late wife, Amy Harper, who passed away in 2020.

“The commitment of the BuildStrong Academy of Orlando to help build the next generation of skilled construction workers will now stand as a living tribute to Amy Harper’s vision, courage and compassion in life,” said the HBI chief executive.

Speaking at the naming ceremony, Harper said that as a builder and developer he has witnessed the economic and societal implications of schools no longer offering what once was called “shop.”

“Over the past many decades, it has been a failure of our system to let the value of career technical training be forgotten,” said the Lakeland, FL-based developer and broker.

“Generations of young students have not been encouraged to consider the possibility of pursuing rewarding careers in construction.

“Today there’s good news. More young women and men are realizing how rewarding a life in the skilled trades can be,” he told the group. “More parents, educators and secondary school students are taking a closer look at the extraordinary opportunities the trades offer.”

About HBI (Home Builders Institute)

HBI is the nation’s leading provider of skilled trades training and education for the building industry. Through pre-apprenticeship training, certification programs and job placement services, HBI provides high school students, at-risk youth, veterans, transitioning military personnel, justice-involved youth and adults, and displaced workers with the skills and experience they need to build a career and change their lives. www.HBI.org