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### **Brees Dream Foundation Funds Construction Trade Skills Program; BuildStrong Academy of Greater New Orleans Providing Free Training**

**New Orleans (April 4, 2022)** --- The [Brees Dream Foundation](#) today announced the launch of a new educational facility in Kenner, LA for training Louisianans in the skilled trades for construction. [The BuildStrong Academy of Greater New Orleans](#) will provide its training programs at no cost to students. Citing the [severe labor shortage](#) here and throughout the country, officials said the purpose of the academy is to teach construction trade skills to anyone seeking a new career path and place them into well-paying jobs.

The foundation, established by former New Orleans Saints quarterback Drew Brees and his wife, Brittany, has funded the academy's construction and operation in partnership with the [BuildStrong Foundation](#), the [Home Builders Institute \(HBI\)](#) and [Franchise for Good](#). Franchise for Good is the nonprofit arm of Franworth, a private Michigan-based firm that scales emerging brands via franchising. HBI is the nation's leading nonprofit provider of trade skills training and education in residential construction.

"Working with our partners, we will grow Louisiana's construction industry and skilled labor force," said Brees at the BuildStrong Academy's grand opening. "We will help create career opportunities for thousands of Louisianans through first-rate skills training and job placement."

The academy will use [HBI's curriculum](#) designed to transform students with no previous construction experience into trained, pre-apprentices sought-after by builders. All graduates earn industry-recognized credentials following six weeks of basic training and six additional weeks of training in a specific trade. Not only will students learn construction skills, they also will be exposed to different forms of trade work, and gain OSHA-10 safety certification, career counseling, job-placement support, and networking opportunities with top industry employers. HBI's training curriculum is developed in conjunction with members of the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) and approved by the U.S. Department of Labor.

The school in Kenner is part of a nationwide expansion announced last month by the BuildStrong Academy, a construction workforce development initiative created by [Pat Hamill](#), CEO of Denver, CO-based Oakwood Homes. Its original training facility in Denver, CO has graduated more than 1,200 students since opening in 2020. The first new BuildStrong Academy chapter opened in Orlando, FL in June 2021. Over the next two years, BuildStrong Academy, HBI and Franchise for Good will launch local chapters nationwide, including academies in Charlotte, NC, Houston, TX and Phoenix, AZ.

“The construction industry is desperate for skilled workers. Young people want jobs that offer good pay, respect from their employer, and a promising career path,” said Hamill. “The nationwide expansion of BuildStrong Academy is a win-win for both builders and those now entering the workforce.”

The need is substantial. [NAHB reported 380,000 open positions in construction](#) at the beginning of 2022, up from 299,000 a year ago. According to the trade association’s chief economist, Robert Dietz, Louisiana was short almost 6,000 construction workers as of January. In a [recent study](#), HBI reported that to keep pace with anticipated housing demand, home builders nationwide need 740,000 new workers each year for the next three years.

“We are in a crisis which not only impacts home builders, but it also affects consumers and communities everywhere,” said HBI CEO Ed Brady. “The more a shortage of skilled workers grows, the more housing and homeownership become less affordable.”

“Older workers are retiring and are not being replaced because the U.S. has not produced an adequate supply of construction labor for several generations,” Brady said. “[Solving the problem will take a collective effort](#) by the construction industry, educators, policymakers, and those who influence young people’s career decisions.”

The BuildStrong Academy of Greater New Orleans expects to serve 200 to 400 students in its first year. “By leveraging scaling methods traditionally used in growing for-profit franchises, our academy in Kenner will have the capacity to train 1,000 students per year,” said Franchise for Good founder Dave Keil.

To learn more about BuildStrong Academy, or register for one of its programs, visit [buildstrongacademy.org](http://buildstrongacademy.org)

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