
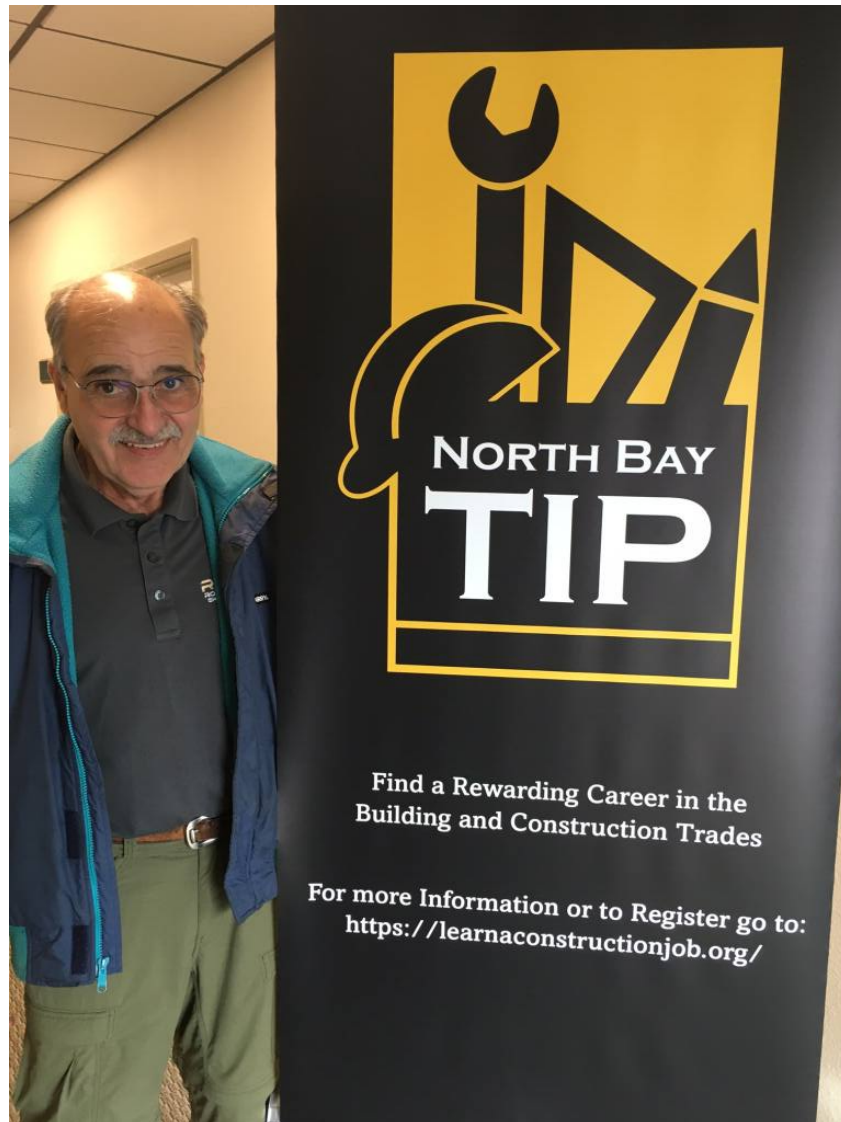


Construction trades program offers free training in Sonoma

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Jobs in the building and construction trades are in high demand, but many graduates of the North Bay Trades Intro Program are finding their job search less challenging. (Beth Schlanker/The Press Democrat)

DANIEL JOHNSON

INDEX-TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

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How to apply for 2024 North Bay TIP

Everyone interested in participating in the upcoming program at Hanna Center needs to take four steps.

- First, they need to register [here](#) by Tuesday, April 9.
- They also need to attend an orientation on April 10, 15 or 17 from 6 to 8 p.m. on Zoom or on April 13 from 9 to 11 a.m. at Hanna Center.
- Next, they need to come to Hanna Center in person with documents on April 20 to complete an application and establish a Zoom interview time.
- They then participate in a 20-minute interview on Tuesday, April 23.

“Our criterion in the interview is simply to confirm the applicant’s interest and commitment to the program schedule,” Cuneo said.

Plans call for candidates to be notified within a week by email whether they are accepted into the program. Classes will begin on April 29.

Jordan graduated from the North Bay Trades Intro Program (TIP) in July 2017, became an industrial painter apprentice three months later and has been a journeyman painter ever since.

“North Bay TIP is 97% responsible for why I can have the status I have now,” Jordan said.

Jesus, another participant in the program, became an operating engineer apprentice a few weeks after graduating and is now a journeyman in the trade.

“North Bay TIP opened my eyes to see other trades,” he said.

Jesus and Jordan are just two of the people who have found success after participating in the tuition-free North Bay TIP program, which offers an introduction to apprenticeships in some 14 major building and construction trade jobs. They include surveyors, sheet metal workers, carpenters, operating engineers, plumbers, electricians, iron workers, sprinkler fitters, insulators, cement masons, brick and tile layers, laborers, roofers, and floor painters and glazers.

The program will return to Hanna Center in Sonoma from Monday, April 29, to Thursday, May 23, after [being held there for the first time in 2022](#). It is 128 hours long and will be held eight hours per day, four days a week, for four weeks (see sidebar). Classes will be held in Classroom 2 at Hanna Center.



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Everyone interested in participating in the upcoming program at Hanna Center needs to register by Tuesday, March 99 and take three additional steps (see sidebar).

“Hanna Center is delighted to collaborate with the TIP program and offer this wonderful opportunity to residents of Sonoma Valley and the neighboring towns of Petaluma, Napa and Santa Rosa,” said Monica Edwards, vocational coordinator at Hanna Center.

Cameron Safarloo, CEO of Hanna Center, said that the partnership aligns with the center’s goal to ensure that students leave the campus with a strategy of securing a sustainable, financially rewarding career path.

“The TIP program offers a huge advantage by providing participants with a solid track to a rewarding career,” he said.

TIP offers four cohorts in various Bay Area regions and attracts about 80 participants per year. The North Bay TIP program — which serves Sonoma, Napa, Marin, Lake and Mendocino counties — rotates its programs to the different counties.

Grant money enables TIP to offer the program free of charge.

The program is open to anyone who is around 18 years old or older and has most of the documents that an apprenticeship typically requires. Documents include a valid California driver’s license, Social Security card, birth certificate or passport and COVID-19 vaccination card as well as a high school diploma or GED certification, or the equivalent.

“We don’t expect them to have all of them because part of our program is to help them get whatever else they need,” said Frank Cuneo, director of North Bay TIP. “But we want them to be people who can commit to completing the course.”

Priority is placed on serving candidates from disadvantaged communities.

“We usually have a fairly diverse group, ranging in age from almost 18 to the 50s,” Cuneo said. “The average is probably around the middle, and we have been running about 30% women.”

North Bay TIP allows its participants to explore many trades and prepare them with the skills and confidence needed to successfully apply for and enter a suitable state-registered trade apprenticeship.

Participants are taught testing and interviewing skills by teachers who have considerable experience in the trades and are familiar with apprenticeships.

“We also cover a lot of work-related concerns, such as working in diverse groups,” Cuneo said. “A little bit of labor history and job readiness training will hopefully make them better than average candidates for the apprenticeship they choose.”

The teachers of the program have experience managing apprenticeships and most of them were apprentices.

“They have received approval to be teachers as required by the local building trades council,” Cuneo said. “They really understand what we’re trying to present students.”

Most instruction takes place in a classroom, although some field trips and hands-on training are included. Participants receive first aid and CPR certification and OSHA training in green construction certification.

“It is also very important that we have guest speakers from the various trades come in and present their own trade,” Cuneo said. “Students can access resources to help them search out what trades fit them the best to prepare for them.”

North Bay TIP stays in touch with graduates after they finish the program.

“We are there to advise them and help them in whatever way we can,” Cuneo said. “So, they’re not completely alone. But they do have to take tests on their own.”

Cuneo said that about 50% of the participants are placed in apprenticeships.

“I would, of course, be happy to see 100% placed in apprenticeships,” he said. “The economy does affect how many jobs are available and we try to keep a close eye on that. We talk about job projections at every one of our steering committee meetings to keep the numbers realistic.”

Andres, who graduated from the North Bay Tip program in July 2021, has completed about 75% of his painter apprenticeship.

“North Bay TIP explained the steps to apply to apprenticeships and the occupation options,” he said. “Guest speakers helped, too.”

Andres is happy with his choice.

“I like my work,” he said.

Apprenticeships start by working at a paid job and attending related classes throughout the training.

“The apprenticeships that we refer people to are all state-registered joint apprenticeship programs, the highest-quality training, and they have a contract that spells out what will happen during the apprenticeship,” Cuneo said.

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Securing an apprenticeship can be challenging, though.

“Some trades are more competitive than others, so our graduates do have to compete,” Cuneo said. “But having completed our TIP program gives them an advantage because the apprenticeships recognize people who have gone through it. Many of them give priority to our graduates in diverse ways.”

He said that people who have finished an apprenticeship are valued much more highly than others when applying for jobs.

“Work and career opportunities are often excellent for our graduates,” Cuneo said. “The key is to get (our graduates) into an apprenticeship and then, of course, for them to do well in it. And the career that follows can be working as a tradesperson in that career for the rest of their career.”

Finishing an apprenticeship can also open doors to other jobs, such as inspectors, contractors, teachers and other construction industry jobs.

The application process for many apprenticeships takes plenty of time and energy investment, but can be well worth it, Cuneo said.

“Sometimes, we see results years later,” he said. “It does happen. I was happy about 18 months ago to attend an electrical apprenticeship graduation where about 18 graduates had taken TIP many years before. We know the program is making a difference and that

encourages us to continue.”

Reach the reporter, Dan Johnson, at daniel.johnson@sonomanews.com.

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