



# APPRENTICESHIP WORKS

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## SHARE THE BENEFITS OF APPRENTICESHIP

Know someone interested in becoming an apprentice? Or an employer who wants to start an apprenticeship program? Information and resources are available at [apprenticeshipmn.com](http://apprenticeshipmn.com).

## BUS OPERATORS EXPAND SKILLS WITH APPRENTICESHIP

When Metro Transit recruits new drivers they usually go through an intensive five-week training program to learn how to smoothly operate a variety of buses along city streets, down highways and in all kinds of weather and traffic before they ever step aboard to command their own route.

Being a skilled driver, though, covers only a portion of the roles filled by roughly 1,300 Metro Transit bus operators serving almost 80,000 weekday riders. They need interpersonal skills, too, to welcome and serve diverse groups of passengers who board buses at more than 11,600 stops across the Twin Cities.

“We wear a lot of hats,” said Alec Johnson, a 16-year Metro Transit driver and trainer. “The most successful drivers see their job as providing a public service.”

To better prepare new employees for everything else that comes with the job beyond driving, Metro Transit launched a two year Bus Operator Registered Apprenticeship Program in 2018. It’s modeled after the blend of classroom and on-the-job training used by trades such as plumbing and carpentry.

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## FEATURED STORIES



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The registered apprenticeship program resulted from a joint effort between Metro Transit, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1005 and The Transportation Learning Center, a non-profit organization dedicated to improving public transportation across the country.

The Twin Cities is only the second major metropolitan area in the country (behind San Jose, California) to debut the program. Johnson, the program coordinator, is contacted frequently by other transit organizations as it catches on in other cities.

All new drivers have the option to participate in the apprenticeship program, which also matches them with mentors for advice and guidance. Mentors are experienced operators who have volunteered to be an apprentice's "go-to person" whenever they need pointers or even just to vent.

About 100 apprentices are currently going through the two-year program. The 171 who have already completed the program became Certified Bus Operators. They can carry that certification to other parts of the country if they want to work for other transit programs without starting over at the bottom of the pay scale.

Once new hires master the skills of operating buses, which may include ride-alongs with mentors, they can focus on the job's multi-tasking duties: navigating traffic while monitoring passengers and avoiding sudden stops or quick turns that could cause riders to lose their balance or get injured – especially those who may be walking in the aisle or between seats.

"We need to run the buses as smoothly and safely as possible," Johnson said.

The Metro Transit bus operators who love their job the most are those who enjoy interacting with and helping passengers. A work shift may include assisting the elderly or disabled, helping parents with kids or young solo riders, assuring new riders, advising tourists who may need directions, calming unruly or agitated passengers, serving homeless riders and more. Having a calm, content group of passengers keeps the job less stressful and more satisfying.

The expanded apprenticeship training and additional ways to connect with experienced colleagues have been especially valuable in the past two years as the nation's transit systems grappled with pandemic precautions, altered routes as more riders stayed home and rising social tensions. Drivers also need to be ready for bad weather, road construction and detours and know how to drive an increasingly diverse fleet of buses of different lengths and types of fuels.

There are a lot of skills that go into the job, said Johnson, who still hops in the driver's seat when needed and especially enjoys helping out with Minnesota State Fair express buses.

"If you enjoy driving, that's a big bonus," he said.

Learn more about Metro Transit at [www.metrotransit.org/metro-transit-facts](http://www.metrotransit.org/metro-transit-facts).



Metro Transit launched its apprenticeship program in 2018 to help give bus operators the skills they need to succeed.

# MINNEAPOLIS AD AGENCY LAUNCHES COUNTRY'S FIRST DIGITAL DESIGN REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

The registered apprenticeship model is used across Minnesota to help the next generation of plumbers, pipefitters, medical professionals and more learn the skills that will lead to a rewarding career and financial security.

A Minneapolis advertising agency is the first one in the country to use that proven formula to train and develop a digital designer.

Remi Banjoko joined Russell Herder as a registered apprentice in July 2021 with an impressive background, holding a Bachelor of Individualized Studies in three areas from the University of Minnesota. He quickly became an integral part of the Russell Herder team, bringing his creative lens to all types of work.



Remi Banjoko, registered apprentice with Minneapolis advertising agency Russell Herder.

“Having Remi on the team has been an exciting opportunity for us all, not just because of the fresh perspective and energy he brings,” said Senior Digital Art Director Zach Spanton who helps supervise Banjoko’s apprenticeship program. “He naturally has a conceptually creative mindset, but he also has a knack for and interest in diving into the details and problem-solving that come with the many forms of digital communication. That intersection of skills and interests will bring him far in this field. I’m grateful for the opportunity to work with him and see how he approaches new challenges as he grows.”

Russell Herder partnered with Apprenticeship Minnesota to design the program. Working with Apprenticeship Minnesota staff was instrumental to the program’s success, said Russell Herder’s CEO Carol Russell.

“Because this was the first digital designer registered apprenticeship in the country, we didn’t have a model we could look to when we were putting the program together,” Russell said. “That was an exciting challenge for our team. We relied on the expertise and guidance of Leslie Philmon and the entire Apprenticeship Minnesota team to make sure the program fit our agency’s culture and our mission of creating work that matters. Without their assistance this would not have been possible.”

Russell said the agency has plans to hopefully expand the program in the future with new apprentices and new disciplines within the agency.

Banjoko’s time is focused on designing engaging graphics for social media, logos and websites. With the Russell Herder team, he also creates user-friendly interactive website experiences. He learns important skills and works with the agency’s clients on a variety of projects.

“I’ve always enjoyed realizing ideas, turning a thought into something actual — something that’s interesting and that people want to engage with. That’s always been the most enjoyable part for me,” Banjoko said. “I typically handle a lot of website maintenance and update tasks. This ranges from swapping out text to completely restructuring pages or even adding new features to a site. I also design graphics for social media which can be a lot of fun!”

Interested in starting a registered apprenticeship program at your business?

Visit [www.apprenticeshipmn.com](http://www.apprenticeshipmn.com) or contact us at [dli.apprenticeship@state.mn.us](mailto:dli.apprenticeship@state.mn.us).

# MCRAE BUILDS BRICKLAYER CAREER ONE BLOCK AT A TIME

At 5-feet, 5-inches tall, and a self-described “girly-girl” who had no construction experience, Amanda McRae is getting used to people not believing her when she says “I’m a bricklayer.”

There’s an awkward or amused pause as they seem to wait for a “just kidding.”

For those who think she couldn’t or wouldn’t become a bricklayer, she takes pride in showing the hard-hatted jobsite photos. It proves she’s stuck with it through cold days, long, back-aching shifts and shown up early day after day. She’s now wrapping up her third year in the Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers Local 1 Minnesota/North Dakota/South Dakota Registered Apprenticeship program.

“If I can do it, anyone can do it,” said the mother of three.

It isn’t easy work by any means. She’s had to lean on friends and family to help with the kids. Her inner strength, resilience and determination help her through.

The desire to provide more for her children and the encouragement of friends who were in the trades led her to visit the Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers training center in New Hope. She was thinking about specializing in caulking, but she met the union president and had a job within two weeks as a bricklayer.

As a registered bricklayer apprentice she is required to attend training for 144 hours per year for three years and accumulate 6,000 hours of on-the-job training.

Other skills, such as reading blueprints, calculating measurements, learning how trowel mortar and grout work, working with a jobsite foreman and more, can be learned through the related technical instruction taught at the training center, workshops and the on-the-job training. The Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers training



Amanda McRae

center also offers a six-week pre-apprenticeship program each spring to introduce basic skills.

McRae started with basic skills ranging from properly swinging a hammer to working safely on scaffolding. She then progressed to the more complex work of calculations for building a wall and making sure measurements were accurate for electricians and other tradespeople that follow the bricklaying team.

McRae’s first foreman, Dan Heiland at Magney Construction, was encouraging when she’d

feel overwhelmed, and she learned to speak up when she needed help. Heiland would take photos that documented her progress and new skills. “That made me want to keep sticking with it and to keep pushing through,” McRae said. “I proved to myself, ‘I can do this.’”

Her most physically demanding job so far has been building 100-foot walls for a new Metro Transit bus garage in north Minneapolis. It required stacking 12-inch blocks rugged enough to resist a fire for three hours. While it has been the toughest job so far, it was also one that allowed her to learn many new skills.

She hopes to work as a union representative someday, but for now, she’s dialed in being among the handful of women busting bricklayer stereotypes as she finishes her last registered apprenticeship classes and completes her on-the-job hours to advance to a journeyworker bricklayer.

She enjoys pointing out to her kids the buildings she has worked on when they drive through the Twin Cities. On a late-winter Friday, she was heading to her kids’ school where her son was going to be in a classroom circus. He’s one of the smaller kids, but he was portraying the circus strong man—possibly mimicking his mom.

“He wants to be a bricklayer,” she said.

# SAVE-THE-DATE FOR LIUNA CAREER FAIR

Attend the LiUNA Career Fair to learn about the laborer trade and their apprenticeship program. Registration is recommended, but not required. For more information and to register call 651-653-6710.



**What:** LiUNA Career Fair

**When:** Friday, May 13, 2022, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

**Where:** Construction Laborers' Training Center, 2350 Main St., Lino Lakes, MN 55038

## NEW HANDOUT ABOUT APPRENTICESHIP AND MENTORING

A traditional **mentorship** is a relationship between two people where the individual with more experience, knowledge and connections shares what they have learned with a more junior individual within a certain industry.

A **registered apprenticeship** is a job where you learn, gain hands-on experience and get paid. Registered apprenticeship is an “earn-as-you-learn” model.

We created a new handout that explores how apprenticeship and mentoring intertwine. It also includes tips and goals to get the most out of apprenticeship and mentorship programs.



**View the handout at:**

[www.dli.mn.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/appr-mentor.pdf](http://www.dli.mn.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/appr-mentor.pdf)

## APPRENTICESHIP MINNESOTA BY-THE-NUMBERS

	January	February	March
<b>Sponsor information</b>			
Active sponsor	199	200	200
New sponsors	7	3	1
New occupations	6	5	0
<b>Apprentice information</b>			
Total apprentices	10,937	10,895	10,664
Women	836	830	811
People of Color	2,285	2,262	2,207
Veterans	716	716	708
New apprentices	162	105	116
Graduations	69	115	104

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