

# Laying the Foundation for a Lasting Career: An ApprenticeshipNC Spotlight on the North Carolina Masonry Contractors Association

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2024 is a momentous year for the [North Carolina Masonry Contractors Association \(NCMCA\)](#). Not only is the association celebrating its 50th anniversary, which is a monumental achievement in and of itself, but it is also celebrating the 70th anniversary of the Annual N.C. State Fair Masonry Apprentice Contest. The NCMCA's mission is to serve the masonry contractors of the Carolinas and promote masonry as the building material of choice and as a successful career path. Registered Apprenticeship plays a vital role in the association's mission and in its continued prosperity.

The NCMCA represents 90 masonry contractors across the state, all of which can train employees through the association's Pre-Apprenticeship and Registered Apprenticeship programs. The programs, which are registered through ApprenticeshipNC, the State Apprenticeship Agency housed under the North Carolina Community College System, currently have over 300 active Pre-Apprentices and Registered Apprentices. Ryan Shaver, Executive Director, NCMCA, promotes the Registered Apprenticeship as a win-win for employers and employees, saying, "It is a true earn-and-learn model...Getting employers to see the benefits of employing young people through the apprenticeship has been a great opportunity for us."

Pre-Apprentices for the NCMCA, who work during the summer and after school, have proven to be an energizing presence in their employers' lives. Cliff McGee, President, NCMCA, insists their excitement is contagious, saying, "You cannot touch the enthusiasm that a 16- or 17-year-old brings to their first job." Kent Huntley, Past President, NCMCA, echoes this, saying, "It is amazing what they learn over the course of the summer. It [Pre-Apprenticeship] is an excellent steppingstone. We had around a dozen pre-apprentices work with us at Huntley Brothers this past summer, and their energy is just amazing."

The Registered Apprenticeship is three years, or 6,000 hours, long. During this time, apprentices complete a combination of on-the-job training and related instruction.

They are also paid using a progressive wage scale, meaning their wage increases as their skills increase. Registered Apprentices assist on job sites, lay brick, help set out materials, and, if they are over 18-year-old, operate machinery.

On top of their bricklayer programs, the NCMCA is also exploring apprenticeable occupations for their 80+ associates so that they, too, can expand their companies' talent pipelines. Through this expansion, the NCMCA aims to highlight the diverse career opportunities in the industry.

“There is a spot in our industry for everyone. We need truck drivers, forklift operators, estimators, and project managers.” —Ryan Shaver

The passion NCMCA members have for their work, Registered Apprenticeship, and their association is clear. When reflecting on the NCMCA's golden anniversary, Doug Burton, Past President, NCMCA, said, “We all belong to the Mason Contractors Association of America. So, we do compare ourselves to our peers. But...we are looked up to across the country because we have had strong leadership for 50 years, and we have members that have had the foresight to move things and focus on the future. Our members willingly give their time to making sure the NCMCA succeeds.

Another striking attribute of the NCMCA is the sense of community it creates and the duty to the industry it instills in its members.

“Doug, Cliff, and I all work for competing companies, and one of the things that I think in our 50 years has made us stronger, is that even though we are competing for the same job, we are still out there as competitors trying to push this industry forward. We have a unique bond in North Carolina where we have that focus on the industry.”—Kent Huntley

It is through understanding the NCMCA members' enthusiasm for what they do that one can also see why the N.C. State Fair Masonry Apprentice Contest has enjoyed such longevity and success. The contest, which at 70 years is the longest standing contest of its kind in the United States, reflects a love of one's work. Competing apprentices practice on Saturdays and before and after work to understand and perfect their projects. Association members volunteer their time organizing, setting up, and securing contributions for the contest. Family, friends, colleagues, and community members show up in support of the competing apprentices. The contest,

much like the association that organizes it, is born from a communal desire to promote masonry as a building material and career.

The North Carolina Masonry Contractors Association celebrating its 50th anniversary is no small feat. That said, when one considers its members' dedication to its mission and its ever-expanding Registered Apprenticeship Program, the accomplishment is not so surprising. An accomplishment of this size takes commitment, it takes passion for what one does, and it takes a determination to improve and succeed. These qualities are all ones that the NCMCA possesses in abundance. Moreover, they are all qualities it inspires in its future leaders—the Registered Apprentices enrolled in its programs.

Are you interested in attending the 70th Annual Masonry Apprentice Contest at the N.C. State Fair on October 21, 2024? Access contest information [here!](#)

*ApprenticeshipNC thanks the [North Carolina Masonry Contractors Association](#), [McGee Brothers Company, Inc.](#), [Huntley Brothers Company, Inc.](#), and [Whitman Masonry, Inc.](#) for contributing to this article.*

About ApprenticeshipNC: Recognized by the Office of Apprenticeship to act on behalf of the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), ApprenticeshipNC (ANC) is the State Apprenticeship Agency (SAA) operating under the [North Carolina Community College System](#) (NCCCS). ApprenticeshipNC registers apprenticeship programs tailored to meet employers' needs— providing structured on-the-job learning, supplemental education, and a progressive wage scale.

This article was also published on [ApprenticeshipNC's LinkedIn](#) October 14, 2024. View that publication [here](#).

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