

CONNECT News

Community Support, Networking, and Assistance for Environmental Career Training

2019 Revisited

EWDJT news from HMTRI

In memory of Art Shanks

1955-2019



In Loving Remembrance
of
Arthur B. Shanks II

EWDJT program lost a champion in December. Art Shanks, from Cypress Mandela Training Center, Inc., is remembered in a tribute published by one of his partner/employers in the PG&E publication Currents.

Posted on January 7, 2020

“PG&E Mourns the Passing of Cypress Mandela Training Center Leader Art Shanks”

By Tony Khing

Well-known civil rights, workforce and economic development advocate Art Shanks, whose work as executive director for Oakland’s Cypress Mandela Training Center helped boost PG&E’s [PowerPathway](#) East Bay training programs, passed away Dec. 29 at the age of 64.

“We will miss Art’s passion and dedication in helping others. Art Shanks and the Cypress

Mandela Training Center have been instrumental in helping PG&E attract and hire local talent into utility careers. Our thoughts are with his family, friends and the team at Cypress,” said PG&E’s Vice President of Human Resources and Chief Diversity Officer Mary King.



PowerPathway Program Manager Justin Real said Art Shanks (left) “had a profound impact on many lives, including mine.” (Photo by Tony Khing)

Mr. Shanks, who co-founded Cypress Mandela in 1993 and became its executive director in 2003, focused his efforts by helping people of color develop life skills while preparing them for careers in the construction, energy and utility industries. Initially, Cypress Mandela was founded to train people to work in the reconstruction of the Cypress Freeway structure, which was destroyed in the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake.

Today, many Cypress Mandela graduates of their 16-week pre-apprenticeship program work for BART and Caltrans. These graduates have supported the construction of the eastern span of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge and San Francisco's Salesforce Transit Center.

They've also benefited from PowerPathway, PG&E's nationally-recognized workforce development program. Starting in 2008, PowerPathway has helped hundreds of people, including women and military veterans, prepare and compete for high-demand jobs in the energy industry.

Since the first Cypress Mandela-PowerPathway training cohort in 2012, 203 students have successfully graduated from eight joint programs, with 76 percent working for PG&E and 94 percent working in the construction or utility industry.

"Mr. Shanks taught us to bend, but not break. His training provided us with the discipline and life skills to make a living in the construction industry. He taught us emotional intelligence. He was an extraordinary leader in the Bay Area. If I hadn't gone through Cypress Mandela, I don't think I would've been able to make it," said Shimia Buie, a PG&E apprentice electrician who [graduated in 2016](#).

The ninth Cypress Mandela-PowerPathway training cohort, Entry to Gas Operations, is scheduled to graduate on Jan. 31. In addition, the Cypress Mandela Training Center Board of Directors has agreed to continue the PowerPathway training cohorts with two additional programs scheduled for later this year.



PG&E Apprentice Electrician Shimia Buie graduated from the PowerPathway-Cypress Mandela training cohort in 2016. (Photo by Tony Khing)

PG&E's relationship with Cypress Mandela dates back to 2009 when the company first provided charitable investments and subject matter experts for its workforce development curriculum.

"The partnership with PG&E is very critical, particularly for the inner city," said Mr. Shanks at the [PowerPathway-Cypress Mandela Class of 2016 graduation ceremony](#). "Without this partnership and getting these kinds of programs in place, I don't think PG&E would have the workforce that it needs for tomorrow."

Mr. Shanks also served on numerous committees for the Port of Oakland and the Oakland Unified School District. He was also on the advisory board of the Federal Committee on Registered Apprenticeships during the Clinton Administration. In 2016, Mr. Shanks received a Jefferson Award in recognition of supporting workforce development in Oakland.

"Art Shanks had a profound impact on many lives, including mine. I can't think of a better way to maintain his legacy than through continuing our workforce development partnership," said PG&E Expert PowerPathway Program Manager Justin Real.

Email Currents at Currents@pge.com

Art made Cypress Mandela Training Center one of our best EWDJT programs

The Cypress Mandela traces its origins to the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake causing catastrophic damage just a few blocks from the original training center. Immediate needs for skilled workers matched Art's interest in providing meaningful jobs to local unemployed and underserved Oakland residents. Back then Art was partnering with the Oakland Private Industry Council (PIC) using Cypress Mandela for training.

In 1998 with base closures creating remediation jobs, Cypress expanded beyond construction trades to provide environmental employment opportunities with seed money from one of the first \$125k EPA Brownfields training grants. The initial cooperative agreement was with the Oakland Private Industry Council (PIC). The successful partnership was funded again in 2004.

By 2008 Cypress Mandela environmental training began branching out on its' own, applying for and receiving a \$200K EPA brownfields EWDJT grant. Meeting and exceeding expectations, Cypress was awarded a stimulus grant for \$500,000 in 2009. With among the highest retention, graduation and placement rates, Cypress has successfully competed for six Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training grants including a FY2020 grant last fall. The original training center which began operating in a 16,000 square foot warehouse now totals 80,000 square feet. The new facility offers hands-on classroom training with 4 acres of outside space (for training, recruitment, and placement events).

Cypress Mandela targets unemployed and underemployed women, minorities, veterans and ex-offenders residing in Oakland, San Leandro and Emeryville. Over 55 percent of residents live below the poverty level with

gentrification pushing residents out and creating unaffordable housing.

The EWDJT program provides three training cycles per year with 50-65 participants per cycle. To instill discipline and a positive attitude, training is intensive with uniforms required and physical activity every day. Instruction begins at 7:00 AM and goes to 3:30 PM, 5 days per week for 16 weeks. Participants must remain drug free to graduate. Heavy emphasis is placed on student services, life skills, and job readiness training.

Art treated his students like his kids... going to court when necessary and taking personal interest in each of his program participants. Because of Art's close relationships with labor organizations and nonunion employers, Cypress Mandela is able to track graduates as long as necessary, sometimes exceeding 5 years. Whenever possible the EWDJT program takes advantage of "first hire" and project labor agreements (PLAs). Additional placement tools include using pre-apprenticeship programs, internships, and direct entry when applicable. Other program mantras include "keep everyone in the program" and "all Cypress graduates find jobs."

Here are a few of the tips Art has shared with us over the years. They demonstrate his dedication to the community and outstanding performance:

"The key to "making this work" was training to match skill, knowledge, and certification requirements needed by employers engaged in the reconstruction effort."

"Cypress Mandela operates on a "Boot Camp" model. Our mantra is "love, respect, and honor. Be with us and we will help and support you..."

"Maintaining funding requires constant attention to quality training and graduate performance after employment. "

“Provide employers with well trained, disciplined employees having the skills needed for employment.”

“Provide the community with a solid well run organization where everyone is “on the same page”.

“Keep close to your graduates, supporters and employers.”

- **Art Shanks**

Check out Art at his best on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zxbEismKdPk>

Thanks Art, for all you have done.

Good News from EPA

Last year at this time, EPA plans were to skip the FY2019 EWDJT grant awards in favor of a FY2020 competition. As planned, an RFP was issued last spring resulting in 26 proposals recommended for funding last fall.

Now the good news - EPA has decided to issue a new Request for Proposals this year for the FY2021 funding cycle. If EPA follows last year’s schedule, RFP’s could be issued this spring with awards in November. With 26 proposals funded this fiscal year (FY2020) and newly funded applicants not being able to compete for FY2021 funding, an excellent opportunity exists for those not previously funded to re-compete. The message to prospective applicants and those not funded this cycle is clear. “Up your game” – focus early on expanding your proposal, partnerships and employer community. Look forward to a spring RFP with a late summer due date.

Congratulations to the EWDJT class of FY2020

During the FY2020 funding cycle a total of 26 proposals were funded. Twenty of those were active grantees demonstrating outstanding performance. Three grantees who have not been funded for at least four years submitted successful proposals and three new organizations were selected for funding. EPA encourages all those not successful in receiving funds in FY2020, to work on their proposals and resubmit this spring. It should be noted that many first time applicants are not successful on their first submission. HMTRI encourages those interested in developing or continuing an environmental workforce development program take advantage of EPA and HMTRI resources and assistance. Here is a list of this year’s successful EWDJT applicants:

- Alaska Forum Inc. (Anchorage, Alaska)
- Auberle (McKeesport, Pennsylvania)
- City of New Bedford (New Bedford, Massachusetts)
- City of Pittsburg (Pittsburg, California)
- City of Richmond (Richmond, California)
- City of Rochester (Rochester, New York)
- City of Springfield (Springfield, Missouri)
- Civic Works Inc. (Baltimore, Maryland)
- Colorado Department of Local Affairs (Denver, Colorado)
- Corporation to Develop Communities of Tampa Inc. (Tampa, Florida)
- Cypress Mandela Training Center Inc. (Oakland, California)
- Earth Conservancy (Ashley, Pennsylvania)
- El Centro (Kansas City, Kansas)
- Full Employment Council (Kansas City, Missouri)
- Great Lakes Community Conservation Corps. (Milwaukee, Wisconsin)
- Hunters Point Family (San Francisco, California)
- Lorain County Board of Commissioners (Elyria, Ohio)

- Lost Angeles Conservations Corps (Los Angeles, California)
- OAI Inc. (Chicago, Illinois)
- PathStone Corporation (Rochester, New York)
- Southern University at Shreveport (Shreveport, Louisiana)
- St. Louis Community College (Bridgeton, Missouri)
- The Fortune Society Inc. (Long Island City, New York)
- Training to Work an Industry Niche (Charlotte, North Carolina.)
- Workforce Inc. dba RecycleForce (Indianapolis, Indiana)
- Zender Environmental Health and Research Group (Anchorage, Alaska)

As we congratulate the above organizations, it should be kept in mind that funding is based on an objective evaluation of ranking criteria. This is EPA's best attempt to select organizations most likely to fulfill program objectives. While detailed and comprehensive, many excellent and deserving programs may be overlooked using this process. Failing to receive an award should not be considered as a reflection on the effectiveness or quality of a program. For this reason, HMTRI strongly suggests that every applicant continue their efforts establishing or continuing an EWDJT program in their community.

HMTRI is updating the EWDJT Employee Finder

Once again, HMTRI is scanning EWDJT grantees for graduation dates, curriculum, and additional background information describing their programs. Data provided allows employers, EPA, and other stakeholders to learn more about environmental workforce programs and the availability of trained graduates. The updated compilation will be distributed on the Job Training listserv, posted to the Brownfields Toolbox website, and

shared with EPA and prospective national employers.

New programs, active programs, and EWDJT alumni, are encouraged to provide their projected graduation dates for this year and next, along with projected number of graduates. Inactive programs including those not currently funded by EPA are encouraged to provide information about their most recent cohort.

Information from the most recent scan can be found at the following link:

<https://brownfields-toolbox.org/certified-employee-finder/>.

To review Social Media information, use the following link: <https://brownfields-toolbox.org/social-media-directory/>.

If you have not received a scan form from Bruce or have questions regarding the Employee Finder or the Social Media Directory, please contact Bruce Diamond at bdiamond@eicc.edu or 563-441-4082.

Brownfields 2019 and the EWDJT All-Grantee Meeting

December 10-13, 2019, ICMA, in cooperation with EPA, convened the 18th National Brownfields Training Conference in Los Angeles, CA at the Los Angeles Convention Center. The next conference will be held in Oklahoma City in 2021. EWDJT programs were represented with an exhibition booth sponsored by HMTRI. Thanks go out to grantees contributing marketing materials to the display. As hoped, several grantees were able to use the booth as a home base and meeting spot.

PowerPoints for some educational sessions are now available on the conference website. Navigate to the list of sessions under the Education tab and click on "Full Description"

under a session description to see if a PowerPoint is available for download from that session.

<https://brownfields2019.org/sessions/>



John Morgan and Steve Fenton setting up the EWDJT booth

HMTRI and NIEHS convened their first joint workshop as a pre-conference event at Brownfields 2019

This year, HMTRI was able to organize the Annual All-Grantee Meeting as a joint workshop with NIEHS worker training grantees. The goal of the meeting was to explore best practices and exchange ideas regarding workforce development and training. The schedule included plenary and breakout morning sessions for HMTRI grantees. Next was a combined working lunch followed by additional afternoon networking and small group discussions with NIEHS Career Worker Training Program grantees. Sessions were informal, with participants raising issues of concern to both NIEHS and EPA worker training programs.

Resources of interest to EWDJT

Technical assistance resources for workforce development

The best place to search for sustaining partners and benefactors includes local government offices, nonprofit and community organizations, corporate and family foundations. Many local government programs are supported by Federal or State block grants to be administered locally. Here are a few national organizations that support local efforts providing life skills training, remedial education and student services.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), <https://www.hhs.gov/>

DHHS Office of Child Care (OCC), <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/parents>

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/programs/tanf>

DOL Employment and Training Administration (ETA), <https://www.doleta.gov/>

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), <https://www.doleta.gov/wioa/>

Institute for Urban and Minority Education, <http://iume.tc.columbia.edu/>

About MyMoney, <https://www.mymoney.gov/Pages/default.aspx>

Financial Literacy and Education Commission, <https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/financial-education/Pages/activities.aspx>

U.S. Federal Reserve, <https://www.federalreserve.gov/>

NIEHS Wildfire Resources and Disaster Preparedness Application

The NIEHS WTP and its awardees have provided resources and training in support of wildfire response operations in the United States. These resources are aimed at

protecting the health and safety of those responding to wildfires. The NIEHS/CPWR Disaster Preparedness mobile app, which includes information on wildfires, allows workers exposed to hazards on disaster sites to access a full suite of awareness-level training resources.

[NIEHS Wildfire Response Training Tool and Resources](#)

[NIEHS/CPWR Disaster Preparedness App](#)

Funding Opportunities

Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving solicitation

Cooperative agreements will be awarded to local community-based organizations, tribes, and tribal organizations seeking to address environmental and public health concerns in local underserved communities through collaboration with other stakeholders, such as local businesses and industry, local government, medical service providers, and academia. Awards are up to \$120,000 per award for a two-year project period.

This opportunity closes on February 7, 2020

[Request for Applications \(RFA\)](#)

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has announced a [funding opportunity to build environmental literacy of K-12 students and the public](#) so they are knowledgeable of the ways in which their community can become more resilient to extreme weather and/or other environmental hazards, and become involved in achieving that resilience. NOAA has identified \$5 million for investment, projecting a total of 8 awards.

Projects should build the collective environmental literacy necessary for communities to become more resilient to the extreme weather and other environmental hazards they face in the short- and long-term.

Projects should demonstrate how they will engage community members to build these capabilities, particularly through active learning, during the award period.

Projects should leverage and incorporate relevant state and local hazard mitigation and/or adaptation plans and collaborate with individuals and institutions that are involved in efforts to develop or implement those plans.

Links to helpful information for applying to this announcement are available at:

<http://www.noaa.gov/office-education/elp/grants/apply>.

Upcoming Conferences

Registration Now Open. The 2020 Pennsylvania Brownfields Conference is set for March 9-11, 2020 at the Penn Stater Hotel and Conference Center, in State College, PA. Learn more

<https://eswp.com/brownfields/overview/>

Who we are- What is CONNECT?

The Hazardous Materials Training and Research Institute (HMTRI) with a cooperative agreement from the US Environmental Protection Agency provides technical assistance to communities interested in developing and delivering environmental job training. "CONNECT" is HMTRI's acronym for Community support, networking, and assistance for environmental career training. Each bimonthly e-publication of CONNECT News features topics of interest to organizations delivering environmental training. Past CONNECT issues along with a

comprehensive collection of environmental workforce resources are available at the HMTRI Toolbox.

<https://brownfields-toolbox.org/>

Join Our Listserv

HMTRI is part of Eastern Iowa Community Colleges and has provided environmental workforce development technical assistance since the inception of EPA's Brownfields Initiative.

For more information on HMTRI technical assistance services or to be added to our Grantee and Community Outreach Listserv, please contact Heather Ballou at hkballou@eicc.edu.



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