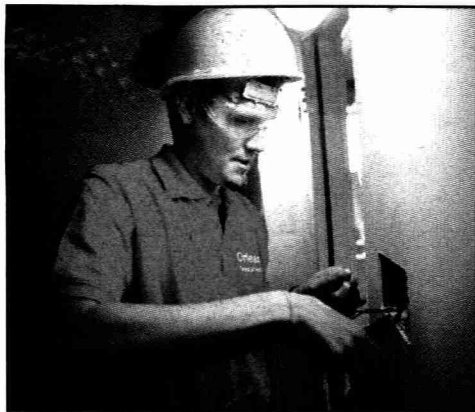


# 40 years of building a future



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TIMES PHOTOS

**Teaching the trade:**  
Orleans Technical Institute students work on a model home located on the school's Red Lion Road campus. The vocational school is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year.

**By John Loftus**  
Northeast Times

Ask Debbie Bello, Orleans Technical Institute's admissions director, for her fondest memory of her 15 years at the school and she recalls crying at a graduation.

One of the grads was an immigrant from Eastern Europe who had had a tough time even getting in. He easily did well on the math section of the Red Lion Road school's admission test,

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but he didn't do well on the English.

Bello said she encouraged him to keep trying. "It took him a while to pass," she said. But he did and got into the school's electrical training program. At his graduation ceremony, he came up to her and told her



she was the only person who had believed in him.

"I was crying; he was crying," Bello said during an Aug. 20 interview.

The school got him started in a career, made a difference in his life.

That's pretty much the point of Orleans, which is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year: Providing career training and making a difference in people's lives.

The vocational school teaches people skills to get out into the workforce, earn good livings and support their families, said Jay Spector, the president and chief executive officer of JEVS Human Services, Orleans' parent company.

Originally a Jewish social service agency, Spector said, JEVS started in 1941 to help immigrants displaced during World War II and to aid returning Jewish veterans. It evolved over the years, providing more and more programs to an ever-widening and diverse population, Spector said during an Aug. 22 phone interview.

Spector said JEVS has greatly expanded its programs over the years, helping various groups of refugees and people with disabilities.

"We've developed an expertise," he said, "in helping people become independent."

In 1974, JEVS started small skills training centers on Castor and Bustleton avenues that eventually led to a school on Rhawn street in 1979 and the new Red Lion Road campus east of the Boulevard in 2007.

There's nothing small at all at Orleans anymore. Even the school's hallways are big. Since opening that building in 2007, Orleans Tech has trained more than 4,400 students there.

"What makes Orleans Tech such a strong educational institution is our ability to meet the training and

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employment needs right here in our region," Spector said. "When the employment demand for court reporters skyrocketed, we were right there with the best possible program to help students leverage that opportunity. We look forward to doing the same for the next forty years and beyond – identifying employment training needs and filling them."

According to statistics provided by the school, trade careers are growing.

Employment in heating, air conditioning and refrigeration is expected to grow 34 percent by 2020. General maintenance and repair work will increase 11 percent. Carpentry jobs will go up 20 percent. Positions in plumbing, pipefitting and steamfitting could go up 26 percent. The need for electricians is expected to grow 23 percent.

And Orleans' staff and administrators want everybody to see the school and all it has to offer during an open house from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 6, at 2770 Red Lion Road.

The event will feature do-it-yourself workshops on home automation, plumbing, soldering, programmable thermostats, tiling, switches and installing fuses.

Employers and other vendors will offer giveaways and prizes. There will be various entertainments, and the school will provide hot dogs, chips, pretzels and drinks. There will be free health screenings. Vets will be on hand to discuss veterans benefits. Admissions and financial aid representatives will help people interested in attending. Employment specialists will help with resumes and job searches.

During tours of the school, attendees will see equipment demos and get a chance to try out a court reporting steno machine. ••

### **Making a difference**

- Orleans Tech started in 1974 by offering clerical skills training to homemakers returning to the workforce.
- More trade programs were added, and, by 1979, the school's growth necessitated a move to the A.P. Orleans Vocational Center on Rhawn Street. Over the years, some people confused the name of the school with the name of the Orleans Theater. "We used to get calls from people looking for the sunglasses they left behind," said Debbie Bello, the school's admissions director.
- In 1986, Orleans opened a Center City campus.
- More and more training programs were offered, and the school moved to an 88,000-square-foot training facility on Red Lion Road.
- In 2014, the school celebrates its 40th anniversary.
- More than 20 Orleans grads have returned to become instructors at the school.