

Q JEVS in the news...

PROGRAM: JEVS' Orleans Technical College

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## Essential connections

*Orleans Technical College honored Horizon Services, Inc., an HVAC and plumbing company that's hired more than 60 graduates in the past five years, at its annual Strictly Business event.*



*Eric Crawford, talent acquisition manager at Horizon Services Inc., meets with Orleans Technical students. In the last five years, Horizon has hired more than 60 graduates from Orleans. Photo credit: Linette Kielinski*

When Makai Chetram graduated the HVAC program at Orleans Technical College in 2018, he achieved two goals. One, he got hired at a job for something he went to school for. Two, he was hired at that job before he even graduated.

Chetram is just one of more than 60 Orleans graduates in the last five years to be scooped up by Horizon Services Inc., a company that provides residential plumbing and HVAC services throughout the east coast. He was hired as a service technician, and three weeks ago was promoted to unit installer.

The partnership between Orleans and Horizon is a significant one – so much so that Orleans honored their partnership at the JEVS Strictly Business 2020 award ceremony. Working together for the last five years, Eric Crawford, talent acquisition specialist at Horizon, said Orleans goes above and beyond in producing job candidates for the company.

“We’ve put a lot of hours in the past five years building relationships with the school and program, so being recognized is an honor,” he said.

The annual award ceremony (virtual this year, of course) honors businesses and individuals that serve as an inspiration in their fields. Nominating the company that has provided jobs to so many graduates was a no-brainer for Tamika Gray, employment specialist at Orleans.

“They honestly deserve it just because of our relationship,” she said in the announcement video.

The hiring process works smoothly for both sides. Near the end of the program, students will send Crawford video introductions as well as their resumes. Crawford makes frequent trips to the school to meet the students in person and determine what position in the company would best suit them based on their skillset and personality.

“Orleans is willing to work with me to get to the root of each individual candidate so we know who they are as a person and where they’ll best fit in the company,” Crawford said.

Take Chetram, for example. Born in St. Thomas, he moved to Northeast Philadelphia when he was 13 and graduated from Northeast High School. A couple of years into college at Penn State, he met someone who recommended getting into the trades, and found himself at Orleans soon after.

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Now 26, Chetram owns his own house while he said some of his friends are in debt. He said during the pandemic, he sees many young people turning to trades as a viable career option.

“You can take these skills anywhere,” he said.

Only 2.5 percent of Americans are qualified to work in HVAC and plumbing.

Even during the pandemic, Horizon has still hired about 10 Orleans graduates since April alone. A few of the students hired in March had to wait a couple of months to start until regular employee orientations began again, but once the business was deemed essential, Crawford was able to get them on board and working.

“The jobs don’t go away – services still need to take place,” Crawford said. ●●