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## Mayor Jacobs' Construction Trades Academy One Step Closer to Reality

*KNOXVILLE, Tenn.*— Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs is one step closer to finalizing a major initiative – creating the Skilled Trades Academy and Regional Training Center (START), a training school designed to attract, train, and retain a quality workforce in the construction industry.

The Knox County Commission will vote next week on a 5-year lease agreement with John H. Daniel to secure the company's 16,200-square foot warehouse at 1801 N. Central Ave.

Associated Builders and Contractors – Greater Tennessee (ABC – Greater Tennessee), which has a similar and successful academy in Nashville, will run the school. The association, founded in 1971, is a part of 69 state chapters across the country representing 21,000 merit shop construction and construction-related firms.

"Knox County is committed to creating opportunities for everyone to thrive," Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs said. "This academy does that by advancing alternative pathways for students and residents while ensuring that our growing workforce will be ready and able to meet the needs of our trade businesses."

The academy will cover a variety of trades depending on demand, including framing, masonry, electrical, welding, and mechanical. The curriculum is Department of Labor-approved, and programs are taught in a classroom setting by instructors currently practicing their trade in the field.

The classes will be held 4-7 p.m. to allow students to work during the day and the programs will take four years to complete. The county expects 50 to 75 students to attend during the first year.

The plan right now is to take control of the facility in March. By August, ABC should be set to staff instructors for the first classes.

Construction companies and ABC-affiliated agencies will help enroll the students and cover expenses, but the academy is open to anyone. The cost will be around \$2,000 a year per student.

The state is providing ABC with \$1 million to complete the training center, including creating classroom space and set-up areas for actual training. Left over money will go toward creating a scholarship program.

"Thanks to the leadership of Mayor Jacobs and Governor Lee, we will be able to offer quality training to graduating seniors and others who wish to acquire training in the trades," said ABC – Greater Tennessee President/CEO Clay Crownover. "For decades, students have been told that college is the only route to a high paying, rewarding career. Through this program and our 25 years of providing training in Tennessee, we will be able to show potential students that working while learning is a quality and financially prudent path to take."

ABC will model the academy after its Nashville operation, which currently graduates 80-100 students a year in various trades. There, instructors have helped general laborers train in mechanical, electrical, and plumbing, among others – all skills that enabled advancement in the construction field of their choice.

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