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JATC training program to keep quality in craftsmanship

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The curriculum will be open and diverse and will encompass basic stationary tool equipment and maintenance, joinery practices, identifying woodworking joints, definitions of cutting angles, geometry, identifying wood species/properties, working with shop drawings, blueprints, safety measures and other disciplines.

There will be a minimum of 144 training hours per year. A program designed for journeymen seeking skill enhancement will also be offered. "Our goal is to have fair labor standards for wages and to make a decent living," Trudeau said. "Going through an apprenticeship program gives you an opportunity to follow down that career path. If you want to be a millwork and cabinetry professional, and

have a good quality of life, the union is the way to go."

John Benson, executive vice president of the Minnesota-based Paul's Woodcraft and a member of the JATC, said the new apprenticeship program is a long-time coming, and that its presence will keep the trade vibrant.

"Our goal is to have fair labor standards for wages and to make a decent living," Trudeau said. "Going through an apprenticeship program gives you an opportunity to follow down that career path. If you want to be a millwork and cabinetry professional, and have a good quality of life, the union is the way to go."

"The important thing is that they get craftsmen back into the trade and that the craftsmen learn what a journeyman cabinet maker has to know. It's not just cutting up a piece of wood," Benson said. "There are so many intricacies to it; there are

fitting joints, cutting joints, understanding different woods and veneers, different glues and sprays, LEED programs, new documentation. You have to learn all that. It is the way the world is going."



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TCF Bank Stadium project gains national acclaim for its architectural millwork

Quality craftsmanship delivered throughout the facility by Paul's Architectural Woodcraft



Over the last 10 years, Paul's Architectural Woodcraft Company/ Mouldings Plus has provided the architectural millwork with a wide range of distinguished projects – from the TPC Sawgrass Golf Country Club in Ponte Verde, FL., to the Washington County

Government Center in Minneapolis. Its work has benefited local judicial systems, educational facilities, and professional sports.

Its reputation for delivering top-quality work at high-end, high-profile jobs was put to the

test recently at perhaps its most ambitious project to date – the \$288.5 million University of Minnesota football stadium (now known as TCF Bank Stadium).

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New Northern States JATC training program to keep quality in craftsmanship

Millwork and cabinetry professionals are often asked to achieve two seemingly contradictory objectives: Deliver high quality craftsmanship while keeping costs low. While resolving these two issues is no doubt challenging, the new Joint Apprenticeship



Training Committee (JATC) of North Central States Council of Carpenters (NCSCC) is determined to strike that balance.

A brand new millwork and cabinetry program is set to launch in Minnesota this spring,

with expectations for enrollment to steadily grow. "Employers recognize the need for skilled, trained craftsman in maintaining our industry," said Donald Kern, Business Representative for millwork and cabinetry with the NCSCC & the Carpenters Industrial Council. "Our goal is to train the next generation of cabinet makers and increase their awareness of the ever-changing technology that impacts our work."

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TCF Bank Stadium project gains national acclaim

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Paul's Woodcraft was put in charge of the entire architectural millwork package – from lockers to skyboxes to entryways.

The bar was set high, according to principals John and Tim Benson, a father-son duo that has been with the family-run business for years.

"We're in very visible places," said John Benson, executive vice president of the Plymouth, MN, company.

M.A. Mortenson Company was the general contractor for the project, which broke ground in July 2007. Mortenson is the largest construction company in Minnesota and the nation's third largest builder of sports facilities. "Mortenson's is a very demanding company, very organized; they dot their I's and cross their T's, and they do everything that way," said Tim Benson, vice president at Paul's Woodcraft, who was jobsite coordinator for the stadium project.

Paul's Woodcraft did extensive millwork to the skyboxes and entryways, but by far the most exacting, time-consuming work took place in the expansive locker room, which measures 60 yards long by 25 yards wide, making it the largest such facility among the Big Ten college football teams.

A total of 120 individual lockers were hand-crafted and adapted to conventional building trends. The company used Makore, a species of hardwood found in Central Africa that is sometimes referred to as African Cherry. Makore has a glister to it and is said to feature excellent finishing and gluing capabilities to enhance the carpentry appeal. "It's unique, and it has a really good looking color with a nice grain to it," John Benson said.

The challenge for the millworkers was to make the 120 individual locker stalls look uniform. The room is in the shape of a football and features a massive LED light fixture overhead in the shape of the Minnesota 'M.' Another 'M' is etched into the individual lockers and also adorns the locker room carpet.



ESPN's Adam Rittenberg, who writes about Big Ten sports, called the locker room "undoubtedly the stadium's best feature."

Because of the stadium's scheduled opening Sept. 12, 2009, keeping to a schedule was of paramount importance. "We always do quality work, we're used to it, but this was difficult and very labor intensive," John Benson said. "Because of the scheduling and having to secure all of the materials and work with the design team and the contractors and making sure it is exactly what the school wants, the scheduling had to move right along. There were a lot of people onsite and all the trades had to work in unison to make sure their job was completed so that the next skilled trade could do its job. Everyone had to make sure they were on schedule."

Staying on schedule is a little easier for Paul's Architectural Woodcraft because the company does all of its own drafting, manufacturing and finishing. It also has

"...by far the most exacting, time-consuming work took place in the expansive locker room, which measures 60 yards long by 25 yards wide, making it the largest such facility among the Big Ten college football teams."

its own installation crew. "We control our own destiny because we control how the job is being done," John Benson said. "We communicate many times a day, and if there is a problem it gets corrected right away. We're not waiting on someone to get a job finished so we can continue. We can finish it even if that means putting in the extra hours. Our installers know they may have to put in a 10-hour day, or work on a Saturday, to get the job done."

Tim Benson said the locker room part of the project seemed daunting at first. "When you first walk into the area you think about how much work you have ahead of you," he said. "But now we can take a step back and see how great it looks and enjoy the positive comments about it. It was demanding, it was challenging, but that's what makes it fun in the end. We stayed focused, kept a couple of steps ahead of the schedule and kept things rolling. It's one of the best run jobs I've been on since I've worked here. I have zero complaints."

About Paul's Architectural Woodcraft

Paul's Architectural Woodcraft Company dates back to 1954 via a couple of owners. Paul's Woodcraft, as it is often referred to, manufactures custom commercial and residential millwork. Some of the products it manufactures include architectural hardwood veneer paneling, reception desks, conference tables, wood and plastic laminate cabinets, door-frames and doors, and stair work and handrails.

The work of Paul's Architectural Woodcraft Company/Mouldings Plus is found in prestigious professional offices, modern manufacturing headquarters, courthouses and sports stadiums across the country. The company

also excels in golf country clubs, such as TPC Sawgrass Country Club in Ponte Verde Beach, Florida.

Its diverse customer base includes the Walker Art Center, Coffman Memorial Hall, University of Minnesota Bookstore, Radisson Water Park of America in Bloomington, Venture Bank, Honeywell, Methodist Hospital and many other discerning customers who understand the skill level of Paul's Woodcraft professionals, all of whom are trained by the United Brotherhood of Carpenters. "Our clients come to us for our thorough processes, innovative design, creative solutions and quality craftsmanship. They stay with us because of our incredible results," John Benson said.

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JATC training program to keep quality in craftsmanship

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Kern said one disarming trend in recent years is the practice of taking cost out of projects, sometimes at the expense of quality craftsmanship. He said that formula will not work in the long term. "If you keep cutting quality you're left with a substandard product. We're still trying to figure out how we can be more productive and put forth a quality product. In the long run, the product you are purchasing today will perform for many years if it has come out of an apprenticeship program like ours."

The NCSCC services Minnesota, most of Wisconsin, and North and South Dakota. The millwork and cabinetry training program will be housed at 740 Olive Street in St. Paul. It will cover a 13-county metro area encompassing the Twin Cities and greater Minnesota. At some point, it will expand to Wisconsin.

The creation of the training program took shape in recent months, when union members agreed to contribute six cents per hour on their own for journeyman upgrades. That effort prompted the employers' interest in establishing the JATC. The JATC will have three

management and three labor representatives on the committee, said JATC coordinator Paul Trudeau. "It's a big undertaking," he said. "You have to develop a committee, then have standards accepted by all parties and then you submit your standards for approval to the residing states or the federal government. Some states have independent apprentice programs, and some are right-to-work states, which Minnesota is not. We want this to be recognized by the government so we can also expand to the Dakotas."

While the JATC has the equipment in place for the first- and second-year apprentices, more intricate equipment like an edge bander must be acquired. To defray the costs of specialized equipment, Kern said the UBC will be looking to enter into partnerships.

Trudeau said that because of the expense of equipment, the JATC may send its apprentices to the UBC's International Training Center in Las Vegas, especially later in the program when they work on CNC equipment and other advanced tools. But to kickoff the training with skills such as basic computer work, the St. Paul facility will host the program.

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The new training program will be housed in this UBC training facility at 700 Olive Street, St. Paul, MN