

# ON SITE

## Related Collaborates with PVJOBS for The Grand

Mixed-use center The Grand L.A. is a towering collection of Frank Ghery-designed residential and retail buildings that is currently being built in the epicenter of downtown L.A.'s cultural district. Developed by Related Companies, the \$1 billion urban destination center spans three blocks, making it one of the largest development projects in Southern California.



*A rendering of The Grand L.A.*

With such an ambitious development venture, Related worked with the City of Los Angeles to ensure that the construction workforce largely represented local workers, including those who are considered at risk. To that end, a community benefits agreement was authorized prior to the project breaking ground in 2018. The

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Ronita Harper works as a tile finisher apprentice at The Grand L.A. project.

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agreement required that 30% of the project's workforce are local workers and 20% are apprentices, with half of those apprentices being workers who are at-risk.

Related teamed up with PVJOBS to source qualified workers who met mandatory at-risk factors. As a result of the collaboration, the project has consistently met its 10% at-

risk hiring goal, with many of the workers being referred by PVJOBS. Moreover, these workers are gaining on-the-job training that will help them further their construction careers. They are able to earn training hours during their work hours on the project.

In addition to career experience, the extraordinary development project is enabling PVJOBS workers to enjoy an assignment of a lifetime. "They're the highest buildings I've ever worked on," said Ronita Harper, a tile finisher apprentice who is a PVJOBS participant. "I love the view of downtown Los Angeles."

## PVJOBS Celebrates Women in Construction

To help increase female inclusion in the construction industry, we at PVJOBS have made it part of our mission to encourage women to participate in our construction job training and placement programs.

Visit [pvjobs.org](http://pvjobs.org) to read about five of our female participants who are working to make a difference in their lives while serving as role models for women working in construction.



Maribel Gomez, PVJOBS Job Coordinator and former participant.

## Carpenters Union Partners with PVJOBS Training Programs

Union partners like the Southwest Regional Council of Carpenters is making it possible for PVJOBS to

continue serving as a national model for construction training programs benefiting at-risk individuals.

Over the past three years, the Council has commissioned the Southwest Carpenters Training Fund to help facilitate a pre-apprenticeship program at PVJOBS.

Through the pre-apprenticeship program, PVJOBS participants can enroll in such courses as Construction 101 and Construction Primer. The Southwest Carpenters Training Fund provides volunteer instructors, and each cohort tours the union's training facility in Whittier to learn more about selecting a career specialty in the carpentry trade. "Our program is based around a pre-apprenticeship curriculum," said Michael LaBruno, Career Connections Outreach Specialist for the Southwest Regional Council of Carpenters. "Our partnership with PVJOBS provides a pipeline into the union for those who want to choose this path as a career."

Participants who complete the courses receive certificates at pre-apprenticeship levels one, two or three, depending on how many cumulative course hours they accrued. By earning these certificates, the union can clearly identify an individual's trade expertise and skill level.

With the growth of the training program, LaBruno is pleased to see how the union's partnership with PVJOBS has made an impact on at-risk individuals seeking a carpentry career. "Our partnership with PVJOBS has met every expectation we've had for this training program, elevating it to the level three programs we're now achieving," he said. "It's been a pleasure to work with PVJOBS to create opportunities for the underserved."



PVJOBS participants are shown training during a carpentry pre-apprenticeship class.

## PVJOBS New Associate Directors

As PVJOBS continues their plans to expand programs, the organization recently added two new members of their executive leadership to help lead this charge. PVJOBS has named Irena Seta and Ron Woodman as their new



Irena Seta



Ron Woodman

associate directors, bringing many years of combined experience in construction training and placement. Seta's role will focus on developing program partnerships, and Woodman's position involves managing construction training and placement opportunities.

Seta is a familiar face to the organization, as she previously worked at PVJOBS as a program and operations manager before becoming an employment program director for Friends Outside, a local re-entry organization. Woodman, who holds a degree in Structural Engineering, has a construction management background for primarily private-sector companies. While both are seasoned in overseeing construction career programs, their

biggest asset is their passion for creating construction career opportunities for at-risk individuals.

Both associate directors are already planning their next steps in providing additional program assistance to the at-risk community. Seta is strategizing ways she can develop partnerships that will lead to broader resources for participants. "To build on our growing capacity for programs, I want to help create a homeless program since many of our participants are homeless and it creates another employment barrier," she said. "I also want to work with the City of Los Angeles to put our participants on city-owned renovation projects." Woodman plans to use his position to strengthen the organization's training programs and industry partnerships. "I want to partner with different trade unions to give more opportunities to our participants," he said.

Woodman hopes that through his job he will be able to influence contractors and unions to view at-risk participants as workers who are just as capable as other workers. "I've always taken a chance on those who nobody else would hire because of their backgrounds," he said. "But often some of them were our hardest workers."

## The Resilience Behind South LA's Resilient

Resilient is a fitting name for this grassroots nonprofit based in the heart of South Los Angeles. Founded in 2018, Resilient provides prevention and intervention services for local at-risk youth. Their services include job placement, school-based services, mentorship, and drug and gang awareness. As a community partner of PVJOBS, Resilient refers at-risk youth to the job program as a pathway for a promising future.

Over the past few years, Resilient has been a beacon of light for neighboring youth and their families who seek assistance for the dire challenges they endure. The nonprofit provides prevention assistance to help youth find positive alternatives to the negative influences of street life and gang activity. "We work with at-risk youth and gang-involved youth to provide alternatives for joining gangs,"



(From left) Resilient Co-Founders Andrea Linares and Michael Guedel stand in front of a photo of Ever Linares, also a co-founder.

said Michael Guedel, Resilient Executive Director. "We also have a re-entry program to reduce recidivism by transitioning them into employment, developing their trade skills, and helping them get into schools or off of parole."

At the onset of the pandemic, Resilient staff acted quickly to meet the needs of community members who sought essential resources during the course of the year. They began partnering with public agencies, community-based organizations and private-sector companies to receive safety materials, food and other goods to distribute to those in need, at no cost. Since opening their doors, Resilient has provided services to about 500 community members.

Resilient Program Director Andrea Linares and her husband Ever Linares co-founded the nonprofit along with Guedel after realizing the desperate need for services for the at-risk youth in their communities. Linares says that people must have a heart for the community to take on such an

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## Making Up for Lost Time

“Working for Tesla is the best job ever,” said solar roofer Steve Howe. “I plan to work for this company for the next 20 years.” Being on a solar roofing team for Tesla has been even more gratifying since holding a career-track job was once considered an impossibility.



Steve Howe on the job as a Tesla solar roofer.

Within the last decade, Howe was serving 25 years to life in prison for committing a succession of burglaries and drug-related crimes since age 18. When the State of California repealed its three-strikes law in 2013, Howe learned that his sentence would be reduced to serving only six more years. He remembers that day vividly, saying, “I got on my knees to tell God I was going to change my life.” And that he did. He soon began to take advantage of educational programs offered in prison, eventually receiving his GED. He then took college courses, earning Associate Degrees in psychology, social psychiatry and early childhood development “so I can help kids take another path than I did,” he said.

Witnessing his transformation, a prison yard captain recommended that Howe participate in a re-entry program as he prepared to transition from prison back into society. Through the program, he enrolled in PVJOBS to study OSHA training and college prep courses. He also enrolled in an East L.A. College vocational training course offered by Homeboy Industries. Weeks before completing his course at East L.A. College, a Tesla manager visited his class to speak about the clean energy company and welcome students to apply to work there. Moved by his story and strong work ethic, the Tesla executive hired Howe, who was the only student of a class of 30 to get a job with the company.

One year later, Howe is a stand-out member of his solar roofing crew, being named “Employee of the Month” five times. He aims to invest his earnings wisely, with hopes of becoming a homeowner next year. He’s thankful to PVJOBS for nurturing his quest of building an enduring construction career. “Everyone at PVJOBS has been so uplifting,” he said.

PVJOBS participants Maribel Gomez, Ronita Harper and Steve Howe featured in this issue have been enrolled in the Hatch Program, which is 100% funded by the Department of Labor Employment Training Administration.

## Board Member Profile: Jonathan Jager

In his role as a staff attorney for the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles, Jonathan Jager works in community economic development to advocate for improved policies for the disenfranchised. From assisting grassroots nonprofits to supporting affordable housing policies, Jager is at the helm of some of the city’s most crucial issues facing underserved communities. It’s his fervent dedication to the work of social justice that also inspired him to serve as a board member for PVJOBS.



PVJOBS Board Member Jonathan Jager

“The Legal Aid Foundation’s clients are the same people who are PVJOBS participants – people who have been discriminated against,” said Jager. “So what I do in both my day job and as a PVJOBS board member is working toward the same goal.” One of those goals is advocating for new policies that reduce employment barriers for individuals with a history of incarceration. “We have a criminal justice system that is a one-size-fits-all system,” he said. “But we don’t have people exiting the system with a clean slate. Or they have to jump through hoops to get that slate.”

Jager hopes to use his legal expertise to help PVJOBS create programs that provide participants with access to legal services. He believes that legal assistance will give participants renewed hope in influencing change for their plight. “There’s no individual solution to poverty or recidivism or the other problems facing these participants,” he said. “That’s why I want to work with PVJOBS to help people navigate this complex legal system. It’ll enable people who don’t have power get their voices heard.”

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endeavor. “You need to have the compassion to serve the community,” she said. “My husband Ever, Michael and I shared that.” Sadly, her husband passed away in November from complications of COVID-19. She believes that Resilient will be a part of his legacy, particularly since he felt it was his mission to impact the same communities where he was raised. “Ever, being from this community, always wanted to give back,” she said. “We wanted to encourage and inspire others who’ve been through the lifestyle, like us.”