

# VA UP TO CODE

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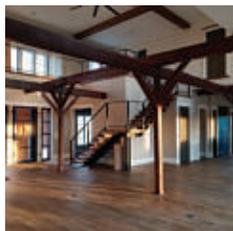
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## AGCVA focuses on community to address workforce shortage



**BY COURTNEY BAKER**  
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Recently, while cleaning out a storage room at the Associated General Contractors of Virginia (AGCVA) headquarters, a coworker unearthed a workforce development VHS from 1996. After locating and hooking up the VHS player, we were ready to observe how careers in construction were marketed 22 years ago.

As I watched the video, it was quickly noticeable that our message has not changed. Setting aside the outdated clothes and the subpar audio, I was hearing almost verbatim what I share daily with people across the state regarding our industry – “Consider a career in construction: We have great pay – no college debt – flexibility – internal career advancement – and more.”

So if more than two decades later, the perks and benefits of our industry have stayed the course, why is the skills gap larger than ever? Why are there more than 174,000 unfilled Virginia jobs in the trades? I do not believe it is the message that needs to be modified, but our strategy must be updated in order for us to see

a positive change in the increasing workforce shortage.

When I joined the AGCVA staff as the workforce solutions manager a little over a year ago, I met with leaders from companies of all scopes and sizes. They all said the same thing: “We are so tired of gathering in the same room just to talk about the same problem; it is time we do something different regarding the skilled trade workforce shortage.”

That is why the leaders in the AGCVA are refocusing their time, talent and resources to address this real pain point. We are committed to changing our approach. Instead of meeting in board rooms, we are meeting at local Career and Technical Education (CTE) centers. Instead of talking about the frustration with



2018 SkillsUSA State Leadership Bricklaying/Masonry Contest sponsored by the AGCVA Tidewater District.

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vocational education being called “alternative education,” we are creating signing days where work-ready, graduating students are signing on with companies to start their careers. Instead of creating an “AGCVA Plan,” we are creating community plans that include partnerships with schools, the chamber of commerce, community organizations, and other associations.

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