

FIRST EDITION 2026

SMACNA GREATER CHICAGO

METAL PRESS

ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE

ATOMATIC
MECHANICAL SERVICES, INC.

 **BULLDOG
CARTAGE**
PORTER FAMILY COMPANIES

SHEET METAL | AIR | RAIL | TRANSPORTATION
SMART
LOCAL 265

FIRST EDITION 2026

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

ELEVATING MEMBERS, WORKFORCE AND OPPORTUNITIES IN CHICAGO

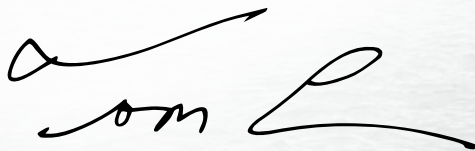
As I step into my role as President of SMACNA Greater Chicago, I want to start by thanking Jeff Lukitsh for his leadership these past few years. His time leading our chapter kept us moving forward, and he leaves the board well-positioned to continue building on that momentum.

Overall, the outlook for the Chicago market is encouraging, as highlighted by our speaker during the January member meeting. Tenant work remains on the upswing, with many commercial spaces being snapped up by investors for redevelopment. Data center work is also very busy in the Midwest, and many companies within our association are already seeing real growth. The outlook for construction activity in the next few years appears favorable.

As a statistics person at heart, I've always enjoyed digging into numbers and seeing how everything adds up. Data can tell us a lot about where we're headed. But numbers only matter if we help lift everyone up. In my new role, I challenge myself and the rest of the board to keep looking for long-term solutions that make sure all members (and our labor partners) are positioned to succeed.

One area we can't afford to ignore? Recruitment. Getting students interested in the skilled trades is critical to the future of all our businesses. This industry isn't what many people still picture from 20 or 30 years ago. Yes, the work is often physical — but it's supported by incredible pay and benefits, and has transformed in recent years to include modern technology across all levels of the industry. Recruitment and training the workforce of tomorrow were among the key topics discussed on a national stage during the 2026 Partners in Progress Conference a few weeks ago. Continuing to share and brainstorm strategies together will help advance our industry even more, setting us up for a more solid future.

There's always a better way to educate and open eyes to the opportunities our industry offers. I'm looking forward to having more conversations with our union and contractor members about filling the skills gap and continuing to work together to keep SMACNA Greater Chicago strong!



TOM COONAN
President, SMACNA Greater Chicago

CONTENTS

2 **LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT**

3 **UPCOMING EDUCATION PROGRAMMING**

Event Recap

4 **MEMBERS PACK MEALS AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE DURING HOLIDAYS**

Save the Date

5 **2026 SMACNA FAB FORUM**

3 Big Things

6 **PARTNERSHIP, PEOPLE AND THE FUTURE OF OUR INDUSTRY**

Member Feature

8 **ATOMATIC MECHANICAL SERVICES**

Event Recap

10 **2026 PARTNERS IN PROGRESS CONFERENCE**

SGC News

11 **DENNIS MORAN REFLECTS ON A LIFETIME IN THE TRADES**

Event Recap

12 **SMACNA MEMBERS CELEBRATE BLACKHAWKS WIN IN MILESTONE SEASON**

Membership News

13 **THE VALUE OF SMACNA GREATER CHICAGO MEMBERSHIP**

Associate Member Feature

14 **BULLDOG CARTAGE**

Event Recap

16 **CLOSING OUT 2025 WITH HOLIDAY DINNER & INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS**

Apprenticeship News

18 **SMART LOCAL 265 INVESTS IN THE FUTURE WITH NEW TRAINING FACILITY**

Event Recap

20 **KICKING OFF THE NEW YEAR WITH ECONOMIC INSIGHTS AT JANUARY MEETING**

Save the Date

21 **2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

Education

24 **UPCOMING EDUCATION PROGRAMMING**

Education

26 **GINNIE FLORADAY SHIFTS FOCUS FROM GENERAL CLASSES TO INDIVIDUAL CONSULTING**

UPCOMING EDUCATION PROGRAMMING

Email Laurie to register at laurie@smacnagreaterchicago.org.

APRIL

04.2.26

Word "Intro-Mediate"
Part 1

04.9.26

Word "Intro-Mediate"
Part 1

04.29.26

Project Rescue

MAY

05.14.26

Excel "Intro-Mediate"
Part 1

05.21.26

Excel "Intro-Mediate"
Part 2

IN BRIEF

SMACNA Greater Chicago's Young Professionals came together last November for a volunteer event with Feed My Starving Children in Aurora, Illinois. Together, our group of 30 members packed and boxed more than 31,968 meals for children in need around the world.

EVENT RECAP

MEMBERS PACK MEALS AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE DURING HOLIDAYS

11.20.25 | CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

On November 20, SMACNA Greater Chicago's young professionals group gave back at a volunteer event with Feed My Starving Children in Aurora, Illinois. An eager group of 30 members came together for a fun and meaningful experience, working side by side to pack and box over 31,968 meals for children in need around the world! This marked our second year volunteering with this incredible organization, and once again served as a powerful reminder of what can be accomplished when we come together to support a great cause.



■ *SAVE THE DATE*



30+
*MEMBERS
PACKED*
31,968
MEALS



2026 SMACNA FAB FORUM

04.12.26 - 04.14.26

*HYATT REGENCY O'HARE CHICAGO
ROSEMONT, ILLINOIS*

The 2026 Fab Forum, presented by Milwaukee Tool, is coming to Rosemont from April 12-14! This can't-miss event brings together industry leaders and fabrication professionals for education, innovation and connection focused on shop fabrication excellence.

SMACNA Greater Chicago member Hill Group is set to host an exclusive shop tour on the first full day of the event. Attendees will get a first-hand glimpse into their campus, including a walkthrough of the state-of-the-art prefab shop and modular construction space. Industry professionals will also enjoy networking and educational breakout sessions throughout the program.



Register for the event!

smacna.org/education-events/2026-fab-forum

MEMBER ONLY BENEFIT

Attend a National event or in-person educational program and receive 50% reimbursement on the registration fee!

IN BRIEF

The 2026 Partners in Progress Conference centered on one clear message: preparation today will determine who leads tomorrow. That means building our workforce, strengthening labor-management partnerships and staying ahead of non-union competition as technology and mega projects reshape the industry.

THREE BIG THINGS

PARTNERSHIP, PEOPLE AND THE FUTURE OF OUR INDUSTRY

The 2026 Partners in Progress Conference in Orlando brought the energy and highlighted massive opportunities in front of our industry, including mega projects, emerging technology and growing market segments. But one line said it best: "Preparation today is power tomorrow."

We're not just trying to stay busy. We're trying to secure the future of our industry through workforce development, strengthened labor-management collaboration and staying on top of what comes next.

WE LEAD
TOGETHER
TO DELIVER
RESULTS
2026 PARTNERS IN PROGRESS

SMART

1



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT & FUTURE TALENT

With 41% of the construction workforce expected to retire by 2031 — and only two new workers entering for every five leaving — workforce development is no longer optional. Recruitment is getting more strategic, from targeted ad campaigns with proven results to organizing blitzes and customized landing pages. But recruitment is only half the equation; retention keeps the talent.

Onboarding, mentorship, soft skills training and strong support systems matter. Apprentices who feel connected stay. Leaders who are trained to communicate and coach build stronger crews. Investing in people is cheaper — and smarter — than constantly replacing them.

Opportunity means nothing without workforce readiness.

2



STRENGTHENING LABOR-MANAGEMENT COLLABORATION

As Mike Coleman said in his opening remarks, don't let the 10% we disagree on overshadow the 90% we agree on. Partnership isn't just for tough negotiations — it's built through consistent communication, mutual respect and trust.

Throughout the sessions, partnership was demonstrated. From organizing non-union contractors and reclaiming residential market share to collaborating with code officials and preparing for mega projects, success happens when labor and management move together.

The data is clear: market share is stronger where relationships are strong. Trust and communication aren't "soft" concepts — they're competitive advantages. Even keynote speaker Melissa Stockwell reinforced the idea: find your team. Together, results are greater.

3



INDUSTRY TRENDS & FUTURE CHALLENGES

During the leadership Q&A, someone said, "If we don't meet the demand, someone else will." In today's market, non-union competition is ready to step in the moment we can't deliver the manpower, technology or coordination required.

Mega projects (data centers, chip plants and more) are stretching capacity and creating opportunity. But leaders are already thinking ahead: what happens when those projects wrap up?

With technology rapidly reshaping the landscape, owners are looking for capability and coordination, not just low bids. That means we must stay proactive to develop leaders, strengthen soft skills, support mental health and prepare our workforce for long-term sustainability.

The industry is evolving quickly. How well we prepare, collaborate and develop our people will better position us to lead the market moving forward.



ABOUT ATOMATIC MECHANICAL

Founded in 1945, Atomatic Mechanical Services has grown from a residential HVAC company into a multi-division firm handling major projects in healthcare, education and industrial facilities. With a people-first approach, they focus on smart, sustainable solutions while supporting their team and staying connected to the community.

MEMBER FEATURE



ATOMATIC MECHANICAL SERVICES: EIGHT DECADES OF BUILDING COMFORT AND COMMUNITY

The end of World War II marked a turning point in American history, spurring a period of rebuilding, an economic boom and post-war homeownership. It was also the time when modern heating and air conditioning systems began to move from luxury to necessity.

Founded in 1945, Atomatic Mechanical Services was born into that era of opportunity with a simple promise that still defines the company today: "We Make People Comfortable." Originally focused solely on residential work, Atomatic steadily evolved as new owners expanded its capabilities, services and reach. Today, the company operates four divisions — construction, service, controls and residential — supporting projects across healthcare, data centers, industrial facilities, offices and educational institutions. In 2025, Atomatic continued their growth with the launch of a new commercial plumbing group.

With approximately 220 employees, Atomatic has built a reputation for technical expertise and reliability. Its service division remains a cornerstone of the business, providing 24/7 emergency response, maintenance and repairs. Over the past four years, the construction side of the company has seen particularly strong growth, fueled by complex, large-scale projects that leverage the company's full range of capabilities.

Leadership at Atomatic reflects deep roots in the trades. Steve Stachorek, CEO and President, has been

with the company for 12 years, noting his father's experience as a pipefitter foreman shaped his perspective early on.

"Hearing some of his daily struggles on the job, he instilled in me how important the field team really is," Stachorek said. "Taking care of them, getting the answers they need, treating them with a lot of respect — that's important, because without them, we're nothing."

Bryan O'Neill, Vice President of Construction, joined Atomatic four years ago and also credits family influence for his path into the industry. His grandfather was a pipefitter, sparking an early interest that eventually led him into leadership.

"People-focus is one of our core values," O'Neill said. "I've always felt it's important to build good relationships with people, whether it's personal or work-related, instead of chasing the next job. We pride ourselves on building those relationships with our customers."

That people-first mindset shows up on the jobsite. Recent projects include a clean room installation for a drug delivery device solutions provider, at a new state-of-the-art manufacturing facility in Vernon Hills. The project required roughly half a million pounds of ductwork, ISO 9000-certified processes and close coordination with Atomatic's controls division to implement precise temperature systems throughout the facility.



Another notable project is Forrestal Elementary School at Naval Station Great Lakes, a brand-new school scheduled to open in 2026. Atomatic contributed to the project's sustainable design by installing a geothermal heating and cooling system with integrated temperature controls, supporting long-term energy efficiency.

Atomatic is also focused on the future of the workforce. Through participation in the Heavy Metal Summer Experience with Sheet Metal Werks, the company hosts high school students each summer for tours and hands-on activities.

"It's been challenging getting younger folks interested in the industry, but I do feel we're starting to take a turn in the right direction," O'Neill said. "It's been something fun to be involved with because we get to show them

you can really make a nice career out of the trades."

Outside of work, Stachorek and O'Neill share another passion — music. Both are members of Superheat, a rock-inspired band made up of area construction industry professionals. The group frequently performs at local charity fundraisers and has helped raise more than \$10 million for organizations including Gilda's Club, Homes for Heroes, and Music Will.

"I've always felt it's important to build good relationships with people, whether it's personal or work-related, instead of chasing the next job. We pride ourselves on building those relationships with our customers."

STEVE STACHOREK

CEO and President, Atomatic Mechanical

That same sense of purpose and connection carries into Atomatic's day-to-day work. Eighty years after its founding, Atomatic Mechanical Services continues to balance growth, craftsmanship and community — staying true to its original mission while building for the future.



Learn more about Atomatic Mechanical work
atomatic.com

IN BRIEF

SMACNA Greater Chicago and Local 265 showed what real labor-management partnership looks like during February's 2026 Partners in Progress Conference. From workforce development and apprentice retention to growing market share through collaboration, the message was simple: when we work together, our industry gets stronger.

EVENT RECAP

BUILDING A STRONGER INDUSTRY TOGETHER

02.16.26 - 02.18.26 | ORLANDO, FLORIDA

SMACNA Greater Chicago and Local 265 were proud to have strong representation during February's 2026 Partners in Progress Conference in Orlando — and the theme was clear: strong relationships build a stronger industry.

Throughout three packed days, the conference tackled real-world challenges and opportunities shaping our industry right now, with plenty of our own partners leading the conversation.

SMACNA Greater Chicago Executive Vice President Tony Adolfs joined Local 265 labor partner Matt Gugala for a panel on apprentice retention. Gugala highlighted a powerful stat: replacing an employee can cost 50–200% of their annual salary, while investing in proper training runs about \$3,000 per year. At the JATC, that investment includes exit interviews, feedback loops and creating an environment where members feel connected and supported.

"Retention starts on day one of the apprenticeship," Adolfs said. "Matt and his team have done a great job keeping members engaged."

The panel also featured Ginger Slaick of SMACNA

Georgia and Stephen Langley of SMART Local 85, with Heavy Metal Summer Experience co-founder Angie Simon moderating and keeping the focus on practical, partnership-driven solutions.

Later, Local 265's Dennis Moran and Joe Carone led a session on working with local code officials to grow market opportunities, highlighting their Building Inspectors Program and the value of positioning the local as a true industry partner.

As Dennis put it: "These people know codes, but they don't know HVAC. Everything we do to create a better building saves lives."

Beyond the sessions, the conversations continued for our SMACNA and SMART members who joined Adolfs for a waterfront dinner at The Boathouse, a reminder that some of the best connections happen outside the meeting room.

Attendees also heard inspiring keynotes from Melissa Stockwell, U.S. Army veteran and Paralympian, and Mike Massimino, former NASA astronaut. Their messages on resilience and teamwork perfectly matched the spirit of the conference.

IN BRIEF

As he prepares to retire after 47 years in the trade, Dennis Moran reflects on a nearly five-decade union career defined by dedication to training and excellence. From apprentice to Director of Training at Local 265, his impact helped shape generations of skilled union sheet metal workers.

NEARLY FIVE DECADES STRONG: DENNIS MORAN REFLECTS ON A LIFETIME IN THE TRADES

In a world of instant gratification, fewer people are staying with their employer for longer than a handful of years. But Dennis Moran, soon-to-be-retired Director of Training at Local 265, is incredibly proud of his union career spanning nearly five decades. On March 20, he'll retire with 47 years under his (tool) belt.

Moran's journey began when he was a freshman in high school, picking up odd jobs for a non-union neighbor and gaining early field experience. After about four years, he landed a job with C&D Heating and Cooling, who sponsored him to get into the apprenticeship program.

"At the time, I was jack of all, master of nothing," Moran said. "And I wanted to be a master of the sheet metal trade."

The rest, as they say, is history. From May 1986 to March 1996, Moran served as shop foreman at C&D. He was fortunate to have learned residential, commercial, industrial and architectural there, crediting the company with helping set the foundation to become more well-rounded in the trade. In 1996, he successfully applied to be a Local 265 instructor, teaching "pretty much everything," but finding his niche in shop.

In March 2009, Moran and his team earned TABB certification from the International Training Institute (ITI), validating the quality of the JATC's training and confirming the program met national standards. This achievement ranks among his proudest accomplishments, followed by the JATC earning Platinum-level accreditation by the ITI in 2022.

"That's how we show our program is top-notch," Moran said. "Our end product is the best union sheet metal worker we can possibly give our contractors. That's what makes us stronger and better than non-union."

In 2012, Moran became the JATC's Director of Training — a role he'll pass on to Joe Carone this spring.

"He's going to do a phenomenal job and has been my right-hand man for the last 10 years," Moran said. "I always say, surround yourself with the best. He's going to take it further than I ever have."

In his retirement, Moran looks forward to relaxing, traveling and spending time with his five grandkids. We wish him the best of luck in his next chapter!

IN BRIEF

SMACNA Greater Chicago members enjoyed a high-energy game at the United Center on January 4, where Tyler Bertuzzi led the Blackhawks to a 3-2 victory over the Vegas Golden Knights. It was an exciting game marked by fast-paced action and standout performances.

EVENT RECAP

SMACNA MEMBERS CELEBRATE BLACKHAWKS WIN IN MILESTONE SEASON

01.04.26 | CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

On January 4, SMACNA Greater Chicago members watched Tyler Bertuzzi deliver a night to remember during our annual Chicago Blackhawks Night at the United Center! The left winger for the Blackhawks capped off a hat trick night by scoring the game winning goal in overtime, leading the home team to a 3-2 victory over the Vegas Golden Knights. The high-energy showdown came during the Blackhawks' milestone 100th anniversary season. Thanks to everyone who came to socialize!



■ IN BRIEF

Being a SMACNA Greater Chicago member means having a trusted partner invested in your business and the industry. From networking and education to advocacy and leadership development, membership delivers value where it matters most.

■ MEMBERSHIP NEWS

THE VALUE OF SMACNA GREATER CHICAGO MEMBERSHIP: GREATER VOICE. MORE OPPORTUNITY.

Being a SMACNA Greater Chicago member means more than belonging to an association. It means having a partner invested in the long-term success of your business and the union sheet metal industry as a whole.



NETWORKING

At the local level, SMACNA Greater Chicago brings contractors together through meetings and industry events designed to encourage collaboration. These professional connections help members stay informed, exchange ideas and address common challenges across the table with others who understand the realities of running a business in today's market.



LABOR NEGOTIATIONS

SMACNA Greater Chicago works closely with labor partners through collective bargaining and legislative efforts that directly impact our contractor members. By representing their interests, we help ensure a strong, unified voice on workforce issues, regulations and policies that impact daily operations and strategies.



EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

From software and technology training to leadership development and management education, SMACNA Greater Chicago helps contractors and their teams stay current in an industry that's always evolving. Our programs are designed with real-world contractor needs in mind — helping members operate more efficiently, competitively and profitably.



YES+

As a SMACNA Greater Chicago member, your company's emerging leaders are supported through our YES+ program. By bridging experience with fresh perspectives, we create opportunities for professional growth, knowledge exchange and career advancement in our community.



Apply now!
bit.ly/4qmd81M

Ready to build meaningful industry connections and gain support for stronger leadership and stronger advocacy? Join SMACNA Greater Chicago and be part of a contractor community invested in the future success of the sheet metal industry.



ABOUT BULLDOG CARTAGE

Bulldog Cartage started as a simple storage solution. Today, the company has grown into a go-to partner for handling materials on complex infrastructure projects, from secure storage to just-in-time deliveries. With a focus on people, smart solutions and teamwork, they keep projects running smoothly while investing in the community they call home.

ASSOCIATE MEMBER FEATURE

BULLDOG CARTAGE: FROM STORAGE SOLUTION TO SUPPLY CHAIN LEADER



Bulldog Cartage was founded in 2012, inside the operations of Porter Pipe & Supply, after several established customers expressed a need for storage and delivery solutions. The Carol Stream, Illinois-based company has flourished since then, becoming a premier provider of critical infrastructure storage, staging and delivery in the Midwest. Over the years, the company's capabilities expanded to meet rising demand to help manage critical projects in high-stakes sectors like data center construction.

"Our growth has been fueled by a relentless focus on people, passion and purpose, turning challenges into opportunities and establishing Bulldog as the go-to provider for leading subcontractors, general contractors and data centers," Bulldog Cartage President Daniel Brown said.

What does Bulldog Cartage provide? End-to-end material management for critical infrastructure projects, including secure storage, tagged and sequenced staging for maximum efficiency, and on-demand delivery via a dedicated in-house fleet of vehicles.

"We are experts in supporting high-profile construction and data center initiatives, ensuring materials are planned, received, organized and delivered just in time to keep projects on track and under budget," Brown said.

One of the valuable services Bulldog Cartage offers is the ability to test and modify project equipment in their facility, providing a much less stressful experience than attempting the same at a busy, crowded construction site, exposed to the elements. Brown said hundreds of contractors take advantage of this each year.



“WE ARE EXPERTS IN SUPPORTING HIGH-PROFILE CONSTRUCTION AND DATA CENTER INITIATIVES, ENSURING MATERIALS ARE PLANNED, RECEIVED, ORGANIZED AND DELIVERED JUST IN TIME TO KEEP PROJECTS ON TRACK AND UNDER BUDGET.”

DANIEL BROWN | *Bulldog Cartage President*

“What sets us apart is our comprehensive, proactive approach to the entire supply chain — we don’t just store or deliver; we own the process from start to finish, eliminating site congestion, delays and storage headaches,” he said, noting the company’s customer focus led them to develop three tiers of storage solutions to meet evolving needs.

Bulldog Cartage employs more than 30 workers and leverages the shared service functions of the Porter family of companies. Brown said the company’s capabilities include over 130 years of combined experience in the sector, enabling delivery of exceptional results on projects ranging from small retrofits to complex “hyperscale” projects.

“The sizes, weights and volumes we execute regularly would overwhelm most providers. We have conquered these by implementing end-to-end support systems: analyzing needs for tailored solutions, securely organizing materials and executing flawless deliveries with our in-house fleet,” Brown said. “This smarter workflow has turned potential pitfalls into triumphs, as seen in our ability to manage intricate projects like data center builds without a hitch.”

The future looks bright for Bulldog Cartage, with a strong pipeline of innovations driving continued improvement.

“We’re on a mission to become a national leader in critical project infrastructure and material handling, expanding our reach while inspiring collaboration and excellence across the industry,” he said. “With our growth trajectory, we have high expectations for continuous improvement, innovative solutions and unbreakable partnerships.”

Speaking of unbreakable partnerships, Bulldog Cartage is proud to support the community it calls home. In addition to its annual winter coat drive, the company regularly supports organizations like Marklund, an Illinois non-profit serving individuals with profound developmental disabilities; and Feed My Starving Children, a Minnesota-based nonprofit that helps package and distribute food to communities in need worldwide.

“Bulldog Cartage is thrilled to give back to the community in line with our core values of faith, family, integrity, excellence and fun,” Brown said. “These guide us to treat our team and partners like family while building better together.”



Learn more about Bulldog Cartage

bulldogcartage.com

IN BRIEF

More than 200 members and guests celebrated the holiday season and another successful year for the association during our Holiday Dinner and Installation of Officers in December. Immediate Past President Jeff Lukitsh welcomed incoming President Tom Coonan, and the evening continued with lively dancing and socializing.

EVENT RECAP

CLOSING OUT 2025 WITH HOLIDAY DINNER & INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS

12.06.25 | NAPERVILLE, ILLINOIS

More than 200 members and guests came together to kick off the holiday season at SMACNA Greater Chicago's annual Holiday Dinner and Installation of Officers. Held December 6 at the beautiful Hotel Arista in Naperville, the event was a wonderful opportunity to reconnect, celebrate the season and reflect on another successful year for our association.

During the evening, Immediate Past President Jeff Lukitsh passed the gavel to incoming President Tom Coonan, who shared his vision and goals for the coming year. Two new Executive Board members were also installed: Mike Suggs as Vice President and Mike Catanzaro as Secretary Treasurer. The celebration continued with dancing, socializing and plenty of holiday cheer, as members raised a glass to close out the year on a high note.





View the full album
bit.ly/4sv64Bk

IN BRIEF

Last summer, Local 265 moved into a new Downers Grove training center designed to keep up with fast-changing technology and workforce needs. With upgraded equipment, a growing apprenticeship program and strong contractor partnerships, the union continues to innovate while training the next generation of the industry.

SMART LOCAL 265 INVESTS IN THE FUTURE WITH NEW TRAINING FACILITY



Last summer, SMART Sheet Metal Workers Local 265 said goodbye to its longtime Carol Stream training center and administrative office, relocating to a new facility in Downers Grove at 3110 Woodcreek Drive. The move wasn't just about more space — it was about building a training center that can keep up with the demands of an evolving industry.

The former facility served Local 265 well, including earning TABB certification through NEMI in 2009, but it had its limits. As technology, building systems and contractor needs continue to evolve, so does the way members need to be trained. The new facility gives the Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee the flexibility to adapt quickly and continue to improve the curriculum and how it's delivered.

"This is going to be a tremendous training center when we get everything exactly the way we want it," said Training Director Dennis Moran. "If there's some specialty training that we can help with, we're right there on board doing it."

Upgrades to the space include:

- Two laser welding booths
- A Lockformer plasma table
- Computer lab that's twice the size of former lab
- Dedicated space for fork lift and scissors lift training



“WHEN WE FIRST STARTED THE SERVICE APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM IN 2004, IT WOULD BE ONE SERVICE TECH TO FOUR SHEET METAL WORKERS...THIS YEAR IT WAS ALMOST A RATIO OF 1:1, SO SERVICE IS GROWING LEAPS AND BOUNDS.”

DENNIS MORAN | *Local 265 Training Director*

By investing in cutting-edge equipment, the union is strategically investing in its workforce by giving members the tools and training they need to succeed. With eight staff members and 218 apprentices enrolled, the program is growing — especially on the service side, which has taken off in recent years.

“When we first started the service apprenticeship program in 2004, it would be one service tech to four sheet metal workers,” Moran said. “This year it was almost a ratio of 1:1, so service is growing leaps and bounds.”

Training also keeps pace with changing regulations. Since January 1, 2022, fire and smoke damper inspections must be conducted by individuals certified in HVAC fire life safety through nationally accredited programs. Local 265 prepares members to meet those requirements through its recognized third-party testing program.

The union’s Building Inspectors Program, launched in 1994, remains a cornerstone. Every two years, inspectors from across the nine-county jurisdiction attend a day-long “crash course” on properly inspecting HVAC systems because, as Dennis says, “They know code, and we know HVAC and this helps fill in those HVAC knowledge gaps for them.”

Local 265 holds Platinum-level accreditation through the ITI and works closely with neighboring training directors at Local 73 and Local 219 in Rockford.

“I’m really proud of our JATC Committee,” Moran said. “Union and contractor both, they’re very devoted to our training. Not only do we train them in the sheet metal industry, we train them on what they need to be a great employee. That’s what I take pride in — helping contractors prosper and keeping our union strong.”



METAL + MEALS

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22 +

REGISTER BY: APRIL 15



REGISTER ONLINE: [SMACNAGREATERCHICAGO.ORG/YES](https://smacnagreaterchicago.org/yes)

IN BRIEF

SMACNA Greater Chicago members kicked off 2026 at our January Member Meeting with an economic update from Kurt Funderburg of Byline Bank. The discussion explored the K-shaped recovery, the growing influence of AI and key considerations for inflation, labor and long-term financial planning.

EVENT RECAP

KICKING OFF THE NEW YEAR WITH ECONOMIC INSIGHTS

01.13.26 | OAK BROOK, ILLINOIS

More than 60 SMACNA Greater Chicago members gathered at Gibson's Bar & Steakhouse on January 13 for our first member meeting of 2026. Attendees were treated to a delicious lunch followed by an economic update from presenter Kurt Funderburg, Chief Investment Officer for Byline Bank.

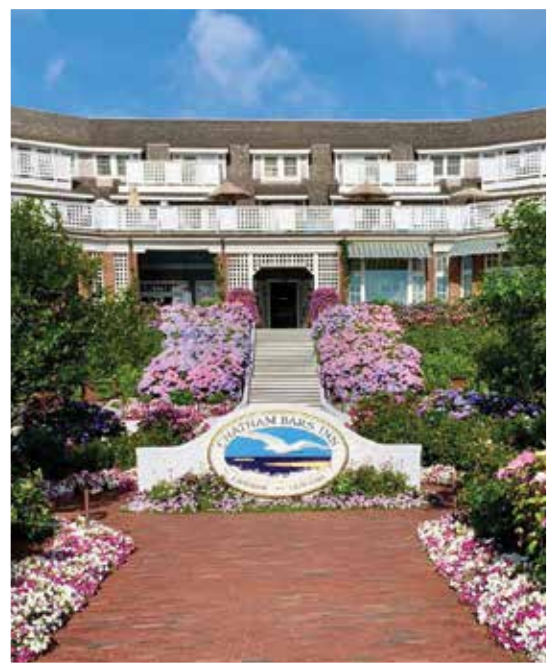
Funderburg walked attendees through the current economic landscape, highlighting how far conditions have shifted since last spring.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE DISCUSSION INCLUDED:

- *The economy continues to show a “K-shaped” recovery, with higher-income households and large corporations spending confidently, while lower-income consumers feel increasing pressure.*
- *Artificial intelligence is now a central force in the economy, driving rapid growth in tech and AI-focused companies, even as questions remain about long-term returns, workforce impacts and who ultimately benefits.*
- *Inflation is moderating but expected to remain above the Fed's 2% target into 2026, keeping interest rates and government policy in focus.*
- *Retirement planning emerged as a hot-button topic, with concerns about the long-term sustainability of Social Security. Members were encouraged to think carefully about retirement strategy-maximizing contributions, taking full advantage of employer matching and understanding the pros and cons of target-date funds.*
- *Deglobalization, reshoring and labor shortages are reshaping the workforce, making future growth increasingly dependent entirely on productivity.*

Funderburg also emphasized preparing for continued market volatility, monitoring AI's real productivity impact and thinking carefully about long-term financial planning in an ever-evolving economic environment.

■ *SAVE THE DATE*



2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

06.04.26 - 06.07.26

*CHATHAM BARS INN
CHATHAM, MASSACHUSETTS*

Experience timeless luxury during SMACNA Greater Chicago's 2026 Annual Conference! This year's event is set at the iconic Chatham Bars Inn on Cape Cod — an oceanfront destination blending classic New England charm with breathtaking natural beauty and rich history.

The conference will include an informational business meeting, along with opportunities to enjoy local activities, curated programming and award-winning cuisine. Don't miss out!



Learn more and register!

smacnagreaterchicago.org/calendar/annual-conference



IN BRIEF

Sharpen your skills this spring with practical, member-focused educational courses designed to support your team's success on the job and in the office.

EDUCATION

UPCOMING EDUCATION PROGRAMMING



NEW CLASS PROJECT RESCUE

APRIL 29 | 8 A.M. TO NOON

Presented by: Doug Reitz, Maxim Consulting Group

Ugly projects happen. In this two-part session, you'll learn how to rescue troubled jobs by spotting warning signs, preventing issues and course-correcting to minimize loss and protect relationships — then build stronger teams through effective feedback, emotional awareness, active listening and constructive communication that drives growth.



Register by April 22!

smacnagreaterchicago.org/project-rescue

COMPLETE THE SMACNA SAFETY AWARDS PROGRAM SURVEY

The SMACNA Safety Excellence Awards Program is open and accepting surveys through May 31. The data collected helps fellow contractors see how their safety performance stacks up against others across the industry.

Completing the 2026 SMACNA Safety Survey also makes your company eligible for national recognition, including the Top Safety Performer Award and the Zero Injury and Illness Incidence Award. Any contractor who participates can also choose to apply for the prestigious Safety Innovator of the Year Award.

We encourage SMACNA Greater Chicago members to complete the survey and help highlight the strong safety culture within our membership!



Take Survey!
bit.ly/40p6Zan

IN BRIEF

For over two decades, Ginnie Floraday has helped SMACNA Greater Chicago members master their software. This fall, she's shifting from classroom teaching to one-on-one consulting, continuing to share her expertise and make work processes easier.

GINNIE FLORADAY SHIFTS FOCUS FROM GENERAL CLASSES TO INDIVIDUAL CONSULTING



If you've taken a SMACNA Greater Chicago software training course, chances are you've learned from Ginnie Floraday. For over two decades, she's helped SMACNA GC members get more out of their computers — saving time, money and headaches. Her no-nonsense, focused teaching style has set the bar for SMACNA Greater Chicago continuing education instructors, but this is her final year teaching general classes. This fall, Ginnie's focus will shift to individual company consultations for training and troubleshooting, and SMACNA Greater Chicago will continue to offer members free, remote one-on-one software training hours with Ginnie.

Ginnie's computer training odyssey began in the early '80s as the training director of a Chicago bank diving into the new world of personal computers. During a visit with the ComputerLand Training Director, Ginnie shared her desire to get into PC training, leading to a training gig with ComputerLand and the launch of her career.

Ginnie purchased her first personal computer in 1980: a brand-new IBM XT and a top-of-the-line dot matrix printer that set her back nearly \$10,000.

"It took 45 minutes to print a spreadsheet, and everyone thought that was fantastic," Ginnie said.

Early in her career, Ginnie found her way into all kinds of businesses and organizations for on-site training. One training session at AMS Industries turned into the company's owner asking her to teach

at MCA of Chicago, where she met Laurie Leonard. Through that connection, Ginnie's expertise made its way to SMACNA Greater Chicago. Fast forward 24 years, and things

have changed a lot. Ginnie said she's had to make her sessions move faster to meet modern attention spans, while still providing clear explanations that'll stick with her students long after the sessions. It's a challenge, but she enjoys teaching.

"I love questions, and I love when people interact," she said. "I call incorrect answers 'good mistakes,' because they give me a chance to explain why students need to adjust their process. I think people learn better from the mistake perspective."

Although classroom teaching has been rewarding, Ginnie finds one-on-one consulting especially fulfilling. By taking a closer look at how individuals and companies work, she helps them develop more efficient, effective processes. And that's exactly what's driving the next chapter of her career.

"I credit my success to the support that I have gotten from SMACNA Greater Chicago and MCA of Chicago," Ginnie said.

A sincere thank you to Ginnie Floraday for her incredible contributions to SMACNA Greater Chicago members. We wish her good luck as she moves forward — still helping people learn enough to be dangerous!

Ginnie Floraday will continue offering one-on-one consulting services to SMACNA Greater Chicago members! Even better — members now receive three hours of her expert tech support each year (up from two), included as part of this valuable member benefit.

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