

Challenge Unlimited Celebrates Its Largest Graduation

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For over 60 years, Challenge Unlimited, a national nonprofit headquartered in Alton, IL, has secured employment opportunities for the individuals with disabilities, the disadvantaged and veterans so they may achieve their highest level of independence. The agency is delighted to announce that nearly 100 of their janitorial apprentices have graduated from their DOL-Registered Apprenticeship Program this month. Approximately 70% of the graduates are individuals living with significant disabilities.

The agency held a virtual ceremony on October 22, 2020, to celebrate the accomplishments of their graduates. Keynote speakers included regional representatives from the U.S. Department of Labor, Governor J.B. Pritzker and City of Alton Mayor

Brandt Walker. Remarks were also given by Challenge President and CEO, Charlotte Hammond, and Executive Vice President of Operations, Tony Crawley.

Ashley Barton, a graduate of Challenge Unlimited's Class of 2020 DOL Apprenticeship Program

“We recognize Challenge Unlimited’s success as an award-winning organization that for more than 60 years has provided opportunities for success for people with disabilities. You have established a national presence in the field of supporting people with all disabilities and Illinois is proud to be your home,” said Governor Pritzker to the graduates.

“You are now part of a select qualified workforce. You are to be commended for taking this extra step, and for investing in your future to be the best you can be. The U. S. Department of Labor joins you in celebrating,” said Wade Johnson, Apprenticeship and Training Representative with the U.S. Department of Labor, to the graduates.

During their apprenticeship, apprentices received over 1000 hours of hands-on professional development and training in the janitorial field. They fulfilled their apprenticeship responsibilities while working at Challenge’s commercial and federal contract sites located in Illinois, Ohio, Missouri and Wisconsin. Apprentices achieved training certifications through both the Cleaning Industry Management Standard (CIMS) training program and the Department of Labor Apprenticeship Certification Program.

More than 50 additional apprentices are expected to graduate within the next year. “For more than 60 years, the pathway to meaningful work for all abilities has started at Challenge Unlimited,” said President and CEO, Charlotte Hammond. “Each of our apprentices are a living testament to our history and a shining light guiding the future for people of all abilities.”

The Class of 2020 Apprenticeship Graduation Ceremony can be viewed via Youtube Premiere at this link: [Governor Pritzker and Department of Labor Recognize CU's Milestone Graduation](#)

About Challenge Unlimited

As a social entrepreneur, Challenge Unlimited has grown its business services from a single custodial contract to over 50 service and production contracts. We deliver quality solutions in facility management, production services and staffing services. An authorized partner of the AbilityOne Program, Challenge Unlimited manages operations

across five states: Illinois, Missouri, Ohio, Wisconsin and South Carolina. Today, Challenge Unlimited employs over 900 workers; of which approximately 600 are individuals with disabilities. [Click here](#) to learn more about our award-winning services.