



# CHAnge-makers

Omari Stamps displayed a passion and aptitude for carpentry at an early age learning about the intricacies of the craft as a teenager while working alongside his family members in construction. He listened, watched, learned and he immersed himself in the ins-and-the-outs of the business.

That hands-on experience led him in 2013 to take a leap of faith when he ventured off on his own to launch his own business, Marsilino's Carpentry. As with most new businesses, Stamps was met with numerous barriers, but he persisted until he got the break he needed.

He applied for the Chicago Housing Authority's Job Order Contracting (JOC) program that encourages established businesses to mentor start-up Section 3 businesses - (businesses that are owned by low-income residents, many of whom receive federal housing assistance) to help them on their road to self-sustainability.

Stamps was accepted, and said, "honestly, there are no words to describe that day. I was thrilled, amazed, excited, thankful. It was just a great opportunity for me."

The goal of the JOC program is to provide participants with the opportunity to perform increasingly and gradually more complex and higher-valued projects and to foster a partnering atmosphere by increasing participation in the Section 3 program; The purpose of Section 3 is to make HUD-financed employment and economic opportunities available to low-income residents.

The JOC program includes a mentoring element in which the construction company works directly with the Section 3 business owner at no cost. It is an effort to assist these small business owners so they can succeed and move up within the program. The construction company then reviews the scope of work and assists them in preparing job order proposals with software designed specifically for job order contracting programs.

Stamps, a native of the South Shore neighborhood, has been working with Gordian Group construction company at CHA's Dearborn Homes for about three months fulfilling every request including rebuilding, rehabilitating, cleaning, painting and polishing units.

"The past couple months, I've been working with my construction manager (Dan Emmerick); I've come to know the CHA guys, and they've all been extremely helpful and patient with us," Stamps said. "One of the first things I learned was how to build a proposal properly, using the system. I've become a little more handy with the computer-pricing projects. I was already a skilled carpenter, but my construction manager (Emmerick) has given me a few more tips, tweaking things to make them look more presentable."

Emmerick is Stamps' mentor and a construction and account manager for Gordian Group with 30 years of experience.

"Whenever I try to communicate with the contractors, whether it be cell phone, text or email, Omari is the first to text me back, which is very good," Emmerick said. "If I have questions, I need answers quickly. And vice-versa. If he has questions, I'm there to answer back, to be on the spot. Whether it's cabinets, flooring, or approval of this or that. Everything he does, he does it well, and he's getting to be very good at it."

Stamps said, "My mother always taught me to go after what you want. I go after things. I couldn't have asked for a better opportunity at this point in my life."

Stamps' passion for his work goes beyond his upbringing and skilled hand. He named the company after a close friend who died in 2015.

"I had known him since I was 10; we grew up on the same block together," Stamps said. "He was a pretty good guy and I named the company after him. He lost his life in 2015, and I started the JOC program six months later."

From here, Stamps hopes to create greater opportunity for himself as he branches out, solidifies a strong reputation for his company and continue his relationship with CHA.



*Omari Stamps, a Section 3 business owner, standing alongside his Job Order Contracting (JOC) program mentor.*