

Diversity Digest

Richard J. Codey, Acting Governor
John F. Spencer, CEO

February 2005

BUILDING A BETTER NEW JERSEY...TOGETHER!

NJ Schools Construction Corporation • 1 West State Street • P.O. Box 991 • Trenton, NJ 08625-0991 • www.njscc.com



A MESSAGE FROM CEO JOHN F. SPENCER

Since the SCC was established two and a half years ago, we have worked closely with our partners—businesses, contractors, and consultants—to meet our obligation to New Jersey's children through the most extensive school construction program in state history.

With your help, we're making great progress, and are committed to doing it in a cost effective manner. We have implemented more than 2,800 school improvement projects at more than 1,700 schools throughout the state—ranging from new construction, renovations, health and safety work and additions. In 2004 alone, the SCC helped realize nearly 50 new schools and additions, and we expect to open 50 more this year.

Although we're making great strides, we face a number of challenges that have had a significant impact on the financial resources of the program. While the \$8.6 billion originally allocated have helped us make tremendous progress, it was understood when the program began that these

funds were a start, but more would be needed.

For example, as you well know, the cost to build schools throughout the state is not consistent, given the unique circumstances in urban areas that may not arise in suburban areas. A number of things cause the price of schools in urban areas to rise above that of suburban areas, including:

- Higher labor costs in northern counties
- Site restrictions in dense, urban areas—this means we have to be more creative with school designs and the cookie-cutter approach doesn't always work
- The SCC's insistence on exceeding federal and local safety standards to protect workers, schoolchildren and teachers
- The soaring cost of acquiring land, residential and commercial relocation, demolition, and environmental clean-up also have an impact on project costs, particularly in urban areas

Notwithstanding the differences between building schools in urban and suburban areas, the SCC is also faced with other funding challenges. Additionally, inflation rates have driven up the cost of labor and raw materials across the board. Pre-K classrooms and temporary classroom units—which the SCC is responsible for—were also not included when the \$8.6 billion funding allocation was established.

All of these circumstances are important factors that provide a better understanding of the cost differences in urban and suburban districts, as well as why the original \$8.6 billion allocation is not sufficient.

Given these challenges, and New Jersey's additional school needs, the SCC continues to look for ways to ensure that all schools are built cost-effectively. We welcome the Governor's initiative for an independent, objective review. As our business partners, if you have suggestions about how to help the SCC meet its obligation to New Jersey's children, we welcome those too. ■

SCC Surety Bonding Program Helps Contractors on the Road to Success

The New Jersey Schools Construction Corporation (SCC), through its Office of Diversity & Emerging Business Markets, has implemented several successful programs over the past two years to help small, women-owned and minority-owned businesses take part in school construction projects across the state.

SCC's small business assistance programs are among the most aggressive—and successful—of their type and include the Contract Carve Out Program, Contractor Training Program, the Mentor/Protégé

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Ellen Neyland, President of Surety Bonding Associates (right) and Carol Beaton, Bond Manager, have worked with the SCC to place over \$15 million in surety bonding and working capital with qualified New Jersey companies, helping those businesses on the first step toward winning school construction contracts.

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Amy S. Greene Environmental Consultants:

Launched With the Help of WBE Certification

Since working out of her living room 19 years ago, Amy Greene has grown the environmental consulting firm that bears her name into a 25-employee shop that provides professional environmental services to corporations, private individuals, non-profit organizations and government agencies, including the New Jersey Schools Construction Corporation (SCC).

Being a certified Woman-owned Business Enterprise (WBE) in a scientific field dominated by men helped Greene, a New Jersey native, land the contracts to start and grow her business. With WBE set-asides struck down by the Courts, the relationships Greene has built in the early years, plus a respected quality of work, has helped fuel her company's continued growth.

"Our certification as a woman-owned firm was likely the impetus for many architects and construction firms to contact us early on," said Greene from her office in Flemington. "We were able to build many

longstanding relationships from those early contacts, and our attendance at School Board Association events and continued work with the SCC, has enabled us to build new relationships and continue to grow the business. And of course, our responsiveness to clients' needs and thoroughness in staying on schedule while providing a quality work product has meant a lot of repeat business for us."

Greene, with degrees in biology and ecology, began her career as a Park Naturalist for the Essex County Parks Commission. In 1986 she started Amy S. Greene Environmental Consultants, Inc., working from her home preparing wetlands studies and reports for a small list of engineering and architecture firms.

In 1989 when Governor Tom Kean signed Executive Order No. 215 which mandated that all State agencies submit environmental assessments or impact statements to the Department of Environmental Protection on all public works projects, Greene's business

really diversified and took off. Today she employs a team of 25, most who are scientists specializing in fields ranging from botany to aqua biology, and has conducted 2,480 environmental projects in nine states.

Greene's firm has been hired by the SCC to perform a number of tasks, including environmental screenings, wildlife surveys, habitat assessments for threatened species, environmental impact statements and permitting assistance for school construction projects in Newark, Orange, Union City, Jersey City, Paterson and Camden.

"We've enjoyed working on SCC projects," Greene said. "Being part of the construction of a new, state-of-the-art school in an urban setting is extremely rewarding. Incorporation of environmental planning early on in the school construction process is both practical and desirable. Early identification of environmental constraints that could affect project design and construction saves time and money, as well as ensuring sensitive environmental areas are protected.

"SCC has a standardized process in place that identifies environmental issues. Because a lot of these projects are in urban areas there's a challenge in developing any of these sites. SCC has been careful about requiring environmental screenings early in the process. They're more diligent about it and, I think, they do have a solid [environmental screening] process in place. On sites like these, there's only so much predictability you can achieve. Sometimes you will find environmental problems only after you start digging," Greene added.

As for her company's future, Greene said, "We plan to continue to pursue diverse projects in environmental impact assessment, wetland delineation and permitting, and endangered species studies. I think the regulations in these areas are going to become more stringent over the years and we've made sure to develop a staff that is prepared to respond to that increasing need." ■



Site of the proposed Creative and Performing Arts High School in Camden.

Amy S. Greene Environmental Consultants performed environmental screenings on the site which consisted of a variety of past uses including gas stations and restaurants. The company's environmental screening looked for contaminants in the project area and found that a gas station on the site had leaking underground tanks in the past, prompting SCC to guarantee that previous clean-ups had been done properly and the site was clear for development.

Office of Diversity Contractor Training Program

The SCC's Office of Diversity & Emerging Business Markets has achieved a small business participation rate of more than 30% on construction contracts and almost 60% on design contracts as of December 2004.

SCC's Contractor Training Program is just one way the agency continues to assist small, women-owned and minority-owned businesses become a partner in building 21st Century Schools for 21st Century Leaders.

The SCC funds six regionally based contractor-training programs that train small, minority and women-owned firms on good business management practices. Consultants hired by SCC offer four contractor training courses over a two-year period. Each course consists of eight sessions, which will instruct participating firms on construction-related topics, such as financial management, marketing, operations, project management, construction contract law and labor issues, as well as other business topics. A minimum of 25 contractors are enrolled per class.

The SCC has divided the state into six regions and the Contractor Training Courses will be provided in each region.

Contractor Training Program Contact Information

For information on the training program contact the business consultant in your area:

Western Region

(Burlington, Hunterdon, Mercer and Somerset Counties)
Joan Walker, Qualified Women In Construction at **856-827-7942**

Southern Region

(Atlantic, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem Counties)
Joan Walker, Qualified Women In Construction at **856-827-7942**

Eastern Region

(Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean and Union Counties)
Eugene Marsh, Construction Project Management Services at **609-951-9401**

Northern Region

(Bergen, Morris, Passaic, Sussex and Warren Counties)
Robyn Odita, Regional Alliance for Small Contractors at **609-392-5600**

Essex County Region

Mark Quinn, Greater Newark Business Consortium at **973-242-4132**

Hudson County Region

Sheila Harris-Adams, Visionary Business Solutions at **856-795-7311**

DISTRICT SPOTLIGHT



Population: **19,012**
School District: **3,640 students**
SCC Projected Share
of State Funding: **\$62,527,565**
Contracts/Grants Awarded
to Date: **\$6,685,430**

★ Pleasantville, NJ

All four Pleasantville elementary schools have received health & safety renovations, including things such as new roofing, electrical system upgrades, window replacements, asbestos abatement, fire alarm system upgrades, structural repairs, and boiler replacement, bringing facilities up to current codes.

South Main Street Elementary School is also slated to receive an addition consisting of new pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms, a media center, art/music classrooms and a computer room.

The district will also receive an alternative high school through the conversion of an existing structure to a special needs facility. Construction will begin in May 2005, with students expected to begin using the new facility September, 2006.

One highlight of school construction plans for the district is the development of a new alternative middle/high school. This new construction will be built on the existing campus. When completed, the existing alternative high school will be used as swing space during the district's five-year construction period. It is anticipated that the students will begin using the new facility in September, 2006.

SCC Construction Trades Training Program for Women and Minorities

For more information, please contact the local training programs listed below or E. Tracie Long at the SCC at (609) 341-5916.

Camden —American Community Partnerships	Ron Green	(866) TRN-4-JBS
Elizabeth —City of Elizabeth	Jessica Topolosky	(908) 820-4030
Jersey City —City of Jersey City	Moses Ballon	(201) 860-4207
Essex County —NJ Institute for Social Justice	Rodney Brutton	(973) 624-9400
Paterson —Paterson Public Schools	Idida Rodriguez	(973) 413-1607
Trenton —City of Trenton	Ruth Carter	(609) 989-3303

SCC Surety Bonding Program Helps Contractors on the Road to Success

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Program and the SCC Customer Service Center. One of the Office of Diversity's most successful programs is its Surety Bonding & Working Capital Assistance Program, which provides the working capital small firms need to bid on state projects.

To date, SCC's Surety Bonding & Working Capital Program has enrolled 135 contractors, 30 of whom have already received bonding—a success rate of more than 20%, considered quite high in the surety bonding arena. Cumulatively, SCC has confirmed bonding of over \$15 million to qualified New Jersey contractors, helping these companies get out of the starting block and on their way to success.

"We've had great success thus far on the SCC bonding program," said Ellen Neyland, whose company, Surety Bond Associates, helps prepare companies to obtain the bonding and capital they need to bid on SCC projects. "Because of the program's success, more and more small business contractors are bidding on SCC work and we expect 2005 to produce many more success stories."

The Surety Bonding and Working Capital Program gives companies the foundation they need to bid on, receive and execute successful contracts with the SCC. ■

LEADERS FOR 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS



Joseph Palaia
Member, NJ State Senate
11th Legislative District
(representing part of
Monmouth County)
Member,
Senate Education Committee

What motivated you to seek office?

Back in 1967, my town was considering building hundreds of garden apartments that I felt would change the character of Ocean Township. As a concerned citizen, I attended a civic meeting and the next day, decided to run for office. I was successful in getting elected to the Ocean Township Council. I served for 10 years, then became Mayor. Next I served as a Monmouth County Freeholder and a State Assemblyman before being elected to the Senate in 1989.

Why do you think New Jersey's school construction initiative is important?

The school construction initiative is important because we must have a uniform set of guidelines. I have 10% of all of the state's Abbott districts in my Legislative District (Long Branch, Neptune and Asbury Park). They are all doing well. It's a credit to the leadership in the towns and to a program like the SCC.



Richard J. Codey, Acting Governor



John F. Spencer, Chief Executive Officer

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 (609) 393-6714 - fax

MISSION STATEMENT

The Office of Diversity and Emerging Business Markets is dedicated to increasing the availability and accessibility of school construction opportunities for small, women and minority-owned businesses and individuals in New Jersey.

For more information on how you can be part of our effort to build a better New Jersey, contact Kellie Drakeford, Director, Office of Diversity and Emerging Business Markets at (609) 292-1680.

WE'RE ON THE WEB AT
www.njscc.com