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NCC Certifies Women Deconstructors

The National Center for Craftsmanship (<http://www.nccraftsmanship.org/>) recently completed the deconstruction of the old Steele's Market Center on W. Mountain Street in Fort Collins. Deconstruction, or the systematic dismantling and recycling of unwanted buildings, is an emerging part of the green building industry. The Center uses deconstruction as a training activity that allows youth and adult students to explore the construction trades in a real-time "learning laboratory" environment. The Steele's project is believed to be the first LEED registered deconstruction project in the country.

"Craftspeople across the country are literally a dying breed" says Neil Kaufman, Executive Director of NCC. "Our community's trade and craftspeople are disappearing faster than we can train their replacements. Deconstruction allows potential future craftspeople to work with the same tools and materials that they will eventually learn to build with".

The Center has pioneered the use of deconstruction as an educational tool, the first program to do so in the country. The majority of students come from the local Poudre School District and other youth programs such as Turning Point Youth and Family Services. However, the Steele's project provided another unique benefit: the first program in the country to train women transitioning from Community Corrections back into the general population. The Steele's project included five women who were certified as Deconstruct Technicians completing a 200-hour training program, the most rigorous of its kind in the world.

Through a State of Colorado Judicial Assistance Grant, up to 24 women will be trained in deconstruction technology this year. The program includes soft-skills, resume writing, and job acquisition and placement assistance. "The goal of the women's program grant is to place 60% of participants in full-time employment within 6 months", says Kaufman. "We've achieved 100% placement with the first group of women trainees in 6 weeks. This is strong evidence that we need to consider opportunity-based, as opposed to punishment-based interventions for certain subgroups of our prison population".

The next group of women is anticipated to begin training this summer on the deconstruction of the former BPO Elks building on Remington Street. Once they find employment, funding is available to reimburse potential employers for their first two months on the job. According to Kaufman, "we recommend these graduates to the business community without reservation. They have paid their debt and are ready and willing to become trusted and productive members of our community".

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