



#LiftNMove



EVENT INFORMATION

Lift & Move USA

Brett Melvin, Executive Director

Tel: (703) 608 3560

brett.melvin@liftandmoveUSA.com

SC&RA

Jason Bell

Tel: (703) 698 0291

jbell@scranet.org

KHL Group

Matt Burk

Tel: (312) 496-3314

matt.burk@khl.com

NCCCO

Tara Whittington

Tel: (703) 560 2391 (Ext 206)

twhittington@nccco.org

www.liftandmoveusa.com

Q&A with Patrick Clark, Lifting Gear Hire (LGH)

March 2017: Lift & Move USA talked to Patrick Clark, National Rental Support Manager at Lifting Gear Hire (LGH), about the Lift & Move USA event being hosted by the company on May 3rd at Bridgepoint, IL.

L&MUSA: Why is the event is important for LGH and the industry?

Patrick Clark: Because there is a stigma that has been created with the blue collar worker. It was not created overnight, nor will the challenge - or crisis - of the skills gap in the US be solved overnight. This is an initiative that was started out of foresight from an industry slowly watching their aging labor staff retire.

It is a grass-roots effort to educate and inform our youth about opportunities currently available, and in the future. Depending on the craft or trade, for every 2-5 folks retiring, there is only 1 to replace them. Today, there are 7 million job openings for these workers.

The big question becomes, where will we find the workforce to deliver the projects that our nation needs? These projects are in the energy sector, including power and petroleum refining, and for our crumbling infrastructure, such as the arterial roads and bridges critical to moving goods and services, not to mention commuting to work or something as easily taken for granted as visiting loved ones. Who will construct and maintain our wastewater and fresh water facilities? The list of areas requiring work continues at length.

The issues being addressed by Lift & Move USA do not affect Lifting Gear Hire as directly as they do contracting companies and trade organizations, but we are an active and supportive member of both the industry and our customers. Anyone who has worked with LGH understands we are in the trenches with them.

As such, we decided from the beginning to back this initiative with both human and financial support. We have never looked back, and continue to get more passionate and stronger in our

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convictions.

The program gives us the opportunity to recruit and work with companies and organisations that have a larger megaphone than we would have alone. After all, if we are all preaching the same message, we should be in concert, doing it together with one consistent and very focused mission.

L&MUSA: What would you say about the particular needs in Chicago?

PC: It happens that some crafts do not have a shortage in the Chicagoland area, in large part because of the region's strong union presence. After all, it is very common for fathers, sons, daughters and other relatives to find themselves in the same union.

That stated, this initiative is not about union versus non-union, or Chicago versus Houston; it is truly an American crisis to rebuild a workforce that does enjoy unbelievable pay, benefits and exceptional rewards.

Chicagoland unions and craft programs may not have a challenge at present; however, they may be the same people that have a shortage in 20 years. Additionally, Lift & Move USA provides insight and education of specific crafts and skills needed. So, if a student from Chicago wants to travel to Arizona, they will be able to relocate, get the skills and training necessary, and be provided a fantastic opportunity to contribute to this industry, for themselves and their family.

L&MUSA: Are careers in trades and crafts given enough attention in our education system?

PC: Without speaking poorly of post-high school education, it is a fact that the college model has not changed for many years. It has in many cases become price-prohibitive. The majority of undergraduate students leave with high debt, an education that is based solely on theory, and in many cases has no affiliation with their future careers.

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In a recent study we found that the top four reasons for the lack of interest or knowledge of trade careers were: (1) high schools don't promote the trades as a viable option; (2) parents push their children to pursue the college track; (3) high schools don't educate students in the trades anymore; (4) people are no longer accustomed to working with their hands.

Personally, I believe we will see the educational system in America adjust to more of a German-style format, where children are in trade-type schools at a very early age. There have been serious discussions on promoting and incepting charter schools founded on skills-based learning. I think it is just a matter of time before the funding and support is there to help prove that model.

At LGH, we are not interested in tippy-toeing around and taking a mild position of 'creating awareness'. Our goal is to drive the solution. And, we are fueling up with 104 octane gasoline for our May 3rd event.

www.liftandmoveUSA.com

CONTACTS

Patrick Clark, Lifting Gear Hire

Tel: (708) 430 3393 (x144)

Patrick.Clark@lgh-usa.com

www.lgh-usa.com

Brett Melvin, Lift & Move USA

Tel: (703) 608-3560

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