



Building a Surprising Framework for Thanksgiving

By Laura Byrnes, APR, CPRC

This might surprise you, but here's something we can all be thankful for during this month when many of us like to build on the notion of giving thanks: construction.

Surprised?

The fact of the matter is that here in Citrus County, the construction industry has strong over the year growth and employers need skilled workers right now. They also need to build a solid foundation of talent for expanding needs down the road.

The US Bureau of Labor Statistics quarterly census of employment and wages reports Florida had 67,968 construction establishments during the first quarter of 2017, the most recent data available, 499,019 were employed in the industry. That's an increase of 5,088 places of business for an over-the-year growth rate of 8 percent and an increase of 38,324 more workers since the first quarter of 2016, for an increase of 8.3 percent.

During that same period, the number of construction establishments in Citrus County grew from 420 to 427 and the county added 420 new construction jobs for a total of 2,878 employees – a job-growth rate of 6.4 percent.

By any measure, that's solid job growth. Moreover, the average weekly construction industry wages also increased here by 10.6

percent over the year to \$717, or \$69 more per week.

During and immediately after the recession, we saw housing starts fall and permits tumble. So it stands to reason that seeing strong growth in the construction industry can only mean good things for our economy.

But as with all things we can be thankful for, there are challenges. Chiefly, how can the industry continue to grow when so many workers disappeared when jobs dried up?

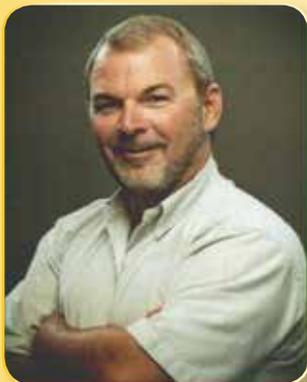
Donna Bidlack, executive officer of the Citrus County Builders Association, made that point recently.

“We lost a huge amount of our labor force in the downturn and that's starting to circle back around on us,” Bidlack said. “We have employers who desperately need to fill positions with qualified individuals, we believe they are out there but just don't know opportunities exist ... (Employers) need help now, I mean like five minutes ago.”

At the same time, Bidlack pointed out that there is a need to identify those at the secondary and postsecondary levels interested in getting into construction or thinking about changing careers.

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Last month, we collaborated with the CCBA to help address this need by holding a Construction Job Fair – after all, “your partner in building a better community” is not only the CCBA’s tagline, it is literally what the not-for-profit construction industry association is all about.

The association is made up of licensed and insured building contractors, developers and subcontractors, as well as members who are in allied industries – all striving to promote quality, affordable housing for Citrus County while creating a favorable business climate for its members.

We also partnered with Withlacoochee Technical College, where the job fair took place and where those candidates were identified for a core construction class that gets underway at WTC in January.

There is also talk of building a construction academy which could provide critical on-the-job training. The academy would be available to Citrus County public high school students who would be able to earn industry certification so they are ready to go to work, if interested.



If you’d like to learn more, call our Business Development Team at 800-746-9950 or our Citrus County office at 352-249-3278

Seeing the construction industry rebound locally is certainly one good reason to give thanks this season as it contributes to a strengthening economy and the ability of our friends and neighbors to find good, gainful employment.

MOVIE NIGHT

Dunkirk

Christopher Nolan retells the epic true story of 400,000 allied (Belgium, British, & French) soldiers who were surrounded by the German’s at the seaside commune of Dunkirk, France; during WWII.

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In a recent Global News interview, after watching “Dunkirk”, a 98 year old Calgary veteran / Dunkirk survivor, Ken Sturdy had stated: “It was so well done. It’s like in every detail it told the story just the way it was. Yes, I’m so pleased I saw it.” Ken Sturdy, who was only 20 years old at the time of the 1940 battle said, “I had the privilege of seeing that film tonight, but I’m saddened by it because of what happened on that beach.”

Rated PG-13: for intense war experience & some language, Christopher Nolan’s “Dunkirk” is exactly that, a war experience; especially if you’re viewing this film in a 70mm / IMAX theatre.

Scripted with minimal lines of dialogue and little use of CGI (Mainly cardboard props / Real - Scale Boats / Real - Scale War Planes & Ships), Nolan’s recreation of the evacuation at Dunkirk is like a cross between a historic documentary and silent film. Shot on location at the original evacuation site of Dunkirk, Nolan tells the story from 3 perspectives; land / sea / air. With a relatively short running time of only but 1hr. & 46min., Nolan manages to mathematically interweave the films 3 acts (Land = 1week / Sea = 1day / Air = 1hour) into 1 nonlinear tale.

Driven by Hans Zimmer’s emotionally intense time ticking score, Christopher Nolan’s “Dunkirk” is one of the most incredibly epic and powerfully visual / sound crafted war films that I’ve seen.

