



Ferguson Invests in the Future of the Industry with

Tool Bag Giveaway



Every day our industry confronts the challenges presented by the lack of available skilled trade professionals. Informing, recruiting and training new talent is a top concern of today's contractors.

To combat this challenge, one industry-leading organization is providing resources to encourage an interest in the residential plumbing industry and give new talent the tools they need to start their career.

Ferguson, the nation's largest distributor in the U.S. serving plumbing and heating contractors, considers supporting trade professionals a top priority.

"In addition to sales and product recommendations, we pay close attention to the vital need to grow the labor side of the construction industry," said Billy Stutz, senior marketing manager for Ferguson. "We know this topic is top of mind with our customers and keeps them awake at night, so we're expanding our partnership with organizations, including the Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors Association, PHCC, to address this need. Issues that affect our customers, affect us and we want to demonstrate that we are a partner – we're in this together. Our goal is to help revive the industry, by helping our customers attract, train and retain new skilled professionals."

Workforce development is in the bag

One area in which Ferguson is expanding its support to the industry is by giving its newest members tools

to succeed through a national partnership with PHCC. When an apprentice graduates from a PHCC program, they receive a stocked tool bag, valued up to \$400, for free. The items, from caulk and gloves to hand tools and discounts on power tools, are the basics for any new contractor's tool bag.

"We wanted a way to invest in the future of the industry and the tool bag provides apprentice graduates a head start on getting the items needed to begin their first jobs," said Stutz. "Redemption for the bag at a local Ferguson branch also gives new professionals exposure to resources that will help them along in their career. They begin a relationship with local contacts who will share jobsite tips, offer product recommendations and connect them with additional resources for training."

Ferguson's new program is expected to reach hundreds of apprentices in 2018. "PHCC estimates 500 graduates will successfully complete their training this year, so we expect to give out as many bags. The first wave of graduations are this summer and we're eager to receive feedback from the graduates in the coming months," said Stutz.

To reach graduates, Ferguson enrolls the support of its area directors and managers working with their affili-

ate PHCC groups. "The chapters in our area are eager to get the bags in the hands of their graduates," said Tony Dixon, director of Residential Trade & Counters – Texas for Ferguson. "Local business owners and board members are very excited about Ferguson's involvement with the apprentice program, because it is more than just a tool bag. It's one of many resources they can give apprentices to lay the foundation for their career in the industry. Along with the bag and tools, we provide a guide that showcases the products, financing options and online services available to support the jobs they will work." Dixon will attend several PHCC apprentice graduations this summer and he's eager to connect with these new industry professionals. "I am excited for the graduates, their families, as well as the companies they are working for. Having more skilled contractors in the trade ensures future growth!"

"Our main goal with this program is to help strengthen our relationship with local PHCC chapters nationwide and learn how we can further support trade professionals new to the industry," added Stutz. "Additionally, we hope to bring on more vendors to stock the bag with us and expand to other trade schools and apprentice programs."