As some of you are aware, the Forum received a grant from the St. Louis COVID-19 Response Fund through the St. Louis Community Foundation. The purpose of the grant is to produce a series of videos tied to mental health/resiliency resources for people in our industry in COVID-19 times.

Construction is (unfortunately) a “leader” in terms of mental health issues, suicide, and substance mis-use even in normal times.

This is a link to an article that explains the grant we received and what our charge is.

We have collaborated with Washington University School of Medicine, the Laborers Union, National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse-STL, Building and Construction Trades Council, Southern Illinois Builders Association, and others on this project.

Here is a link to the final edit on an amazing video — produced by your fellow bcard member Amanda Aschinger of Solstice Productions. All eight videos in the series will follow the same template. Editing is wrapping up.

The eight videos will address the following topics:

- Family Support
- Isolation and Loneliness
- Staying Safe
- Substance Misuse
- Financial Life Resources
- Resilience
- Stress/Suicide
- Support Your Own Mental Health

They will refer viewers to a resource directory website (actually an aliased address in the Forum site) www.TellMeHowSTL.org.

The site will be live probably this week or early next week. It includes hundreds of resources — links, videos, PDFs.
April 21, 2020

To: St. Louis Community Foundation

From: Tim Wies, President & CEO, TJ Wies Contracting, Inc.

Subject: SLCF COVID-19 Impact Grant

I am writing to urgently encourage you to find this proposal from Construction Forum for a communication and training effort addressing the additional impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on mental health, opioid abuse, and suicide among construction workers.

TJ Wies Contracting, started 25 years ago, is the 19th largest wall and ceiling contracting company in the United States. Our recent or continuing TJ Wies Contracting projects include those at SSM Health St. Louis University Hospital, Centene Corporation, the Museum at Gateway Arch National Park, and Ballpark Village. Our company has been national recognized as a longtime innovator in building an inclusive workforce pipeline.

Our craftworkers in construction are, statistically, the most adversely impacted among classes of workers for mental stress, opioid abuse, and suicide. This is the result of several factors, including the physically demanding, deadline-driven nature of the work and the aging of our workforce.

COVID-19 has created additional mental pressures on our workers. Their work is deemed “essential” and some workers have contracted the disease despite the industry’s precautions. Other workers are experiencing layoffs as owners put the brakes on major projects.

Construction Forum has a seven-year history of building collaborations in our industry and region to address issues in an inclusive, collaborative fashion. They have been extremely successful at bringing together diverse groups.

Construction Forum has an ability to employ communication tools – email, website, and personal networking – with a lens on social equity and economic growth for all; that makes them the logical organization to spearhead this project.

Sincerely,

Timothy J. Wies
President, TJ Wies Contracting, Inc.
April 20, 2020

To: St. Louis Community Foundation

From: Jenny Armbruster, Deputy Executive Director, National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse-St. Louis Area

Subject: SLCF COVID-19 Impact Grant

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express our support for funding this proposal from Construction Forum for a communication and training effort addressing the additional impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on mental health, opioid misuse and opioid use disorder, and suicide among construction workers.

In all matters related to alcohol, tobacco, and other drug abuse, the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse – St. Louis Area (NCADA) has been the place to turn since 1965. Construction Forum – which has built a solid reputation for fostering inclusive engagement, unbiased communication, and focused action – began its collaboration with NCADA in St. Louis in 2016. The Forum organized a program, “OPIOIDS, a Building Epidemic,” which attacked the issue of opioid abuse among construction workers head on.

The program – with half a dozen leading experts participating – attracted several hundred persons. It garnered national media attention from Bloomberg and Forbes. Most important, the ongoing efforts of Construction Forum focused collaborative effort which continues to this day, with efforts ranging from on-the-ground efforts to an annual program by University of MO Extension.

Construction Forum has the credibility and the tools to lead this collaborative effort. The construction workforce is adversely impacted in the areas of mental health, addiction, and suicide even in the best of times.

The COVID-19 has compounded that impact. Construction Forum has both the credibility and the skill sets needed to reach a broad audience and to leverage the message to struggling workers that they are not alone. NCADA looks forward to partnering with the Construction Forum in these efforts to provide information and programming related to substance misuse and substance use disorders.

Sincerely,

Jenny Armbruster
NCADA Deputy Executive Director
April 20, 2020

To: St. Louis Community Foundation

From: John Stiffler, Executive Secretary-Treasurer, St. Louis Building and Construction Trades Council

Subject: SLCF COVID-19 Impact Grant

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing to urge you to fund this proposal from Construction Forum for a communication and training effort addressing the additional impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on opioid abuse, mental health, and suicide among construction workers.

The St. Louis Building and Construction Trades Council has been the voice of organized labor in the St. Louis Region's construction industry since 1910.

Construction workers are – in normal times – the most adversely impacted among classes of workers for opioid abuse and suicide. COVID19, with our workers and their work deemed "essential" and some workers contracting the disease despite our best precautions, has created unrelenting pressures beyond those inherent in construction.

Construction Forum has a seven-year history of building collaborations in our industry and region to address issues in an inclusive, collaborative fashion. They have been a dependable partner, bringing together diverse groups. This current proposal is no exception: The Forum has assembled partners for this project in the employer, academic, labor, and community outreach sectors.

The Construction Forum's ability to employ an arsenal of communication tools – email, website, and simple tenacity and one-on-one relationships to get seemingly impossible things done in terms of social equity and economic growth make them the logical organization to spearhead this project.

Sincerely,

John J. Stiffler
Executive Secretary-Treasurer
Division of General Medical Sciences

April 21, 2020

Tom Finan
Executive Director
Construction Forum STL
3245 Hampton Avenue, Second Floor
St. Louis, MO 63139

Dear Mr. Finan,
We want to express our strong support for your application to the St. Louis Community Foundation’s COVID-19 Regional Response Fund. Your proposal to develop health training videos for the regional construction industry will be very beneficial to the workers, particularly since they continue to go to work every day. The workplace can be a way to reach these workers to distribute information about COVID-19 and how it can best be managed; however, the workplace presents many mental health challenges which are amplified by COVID-19. The Washington University Healthy Work Center is a group of researchers who conduct prevention and intervention studies with work populations. We have conducted many studies with construction workers in our local region. These studies have covered a broad range of topics including suicide prevention, opioid prescriptions and overdose in the workplace, mental health and healthy lifestyle, social disparities among workers, as well as traditional interventions on workplace safety and health.
For this project, we will use our vast resources and past work to create the content and scripts for the videos. Dr. Johr. Gaal will work with our team to develop the content. We will provide these services in kind, as they fall within a larger study we are running on healthy living among construction workers. We believe these videos will provide timely information for construction workers, many of whom already suffer from mental health issues and social disparities.
We enthusiastically support your project and look forward to having the opportunity work with your team.

Thank you,

Ann Marie Dale
Associate Professor in Medicine
Washington University in St. Louis
To: St. Louis Community Foundation
From: Harry Miller, Safety Director, SAK Construction, LLC
Subject: SLFC COVID-19 impact Grant

I am writing to urgently encourage you to fund this proposal from Construction Forum for a communication and training effort addressing the additional impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on mental health, opioid abuse, and suicide among construction workers.

SAK Construction LLC, is a specialty contractor that works throughout the United States in the sewer and pipeline renewal and the tunneling industries.

Statistics show craftworkers in construction are, the most adversely impacted among classes of workers for mental stress, opioid abuse, and suicide. This is the result of several factors, including the demanding toll taken on one body, schedules, pace, and deadlines, and the aging of our workforce. Unfortunately, SAK Construction recently lost of its family members to suicide and it has greatly impacted everyone employed here.

COVID-19 has created additional mental pressures on our workers. Their work is deemed "essential" and some workers have contracted the disease despite the industry's precautions. Other workers are experiencing layoffs as owners put the brakes on major projects.

Construction Forum has a seven-year history of building collaborations in our industry and region to address issues in an inclusive, collaborative fashion. They have been extremely successful at bringing together diverse groups.
Construction Forum has an ability to employ communication tools—email, website, and personal networking—with a lens on social equity and economic growth for all that makes them the logical organization to spearhead this project.

REGARDS,

HARRY MILLER, CSP
DIRECTOR OF SAFETY
SAK CONSTRUCTION, LLC
April 20, 2020

To: St. Louis Community Foundation

From: Don Willey, Business Manager, Laborers Local 110

Subject: SLCF COVID-19 Impact Grant

We are writing to strongly encourage you to fund Construction Forum’s proposal for a communication and training effort addressing the additional impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on opioid abuse, mental health, and suicide among construction workers.

For many years, Laborers Local 110, and its regional parent organization the Eastern Missouri Laborers District Council have been at the forefront of advocacy for promoting mental health, combatting opioid abuse, preventing suicide among our workforce. The Laborers union has an extremely diverse membership who are residents of the entire STL Region.

We have worked closely with Construction Forum on these issues throughout the Forum’s history. They are a strong partner with a single-minded focus on making our industry and region a better place to live, viewed through a social equity lens.

COVID-19 has compounded the conditions that demonstrably make construction one of the most stressful industries for its workers, resulting in mental health issues, opioid addiction, and suicide.

We believe that the Forum has the ability and the communication tools to successfully mount and manage this campaign.

Sincerely,

Don Willey
Business Manager
Laborers’ Local 110
To: St. Louis Community Foundation

From: Donna Richter CEO, Southern Illinois Builders Association

Subject: SLCF COVID-19 Impact Grant

I am writing to endorse without reservation Construction Forum’s proposal for a CFSL Impact Grant to address opioid abuse, suicide, mental health in the construction industry.

Established in 1945, Southern Illinois Builders Association (SIBA) represents approximately 500 construction companies throughout Southern Illinois and is the largest regional contractor association in Illinois. SIBA and its and member partner with organized labor on all workforce-related issues.

Since its founding in 2013, Construction Forum has demonstrated a commitment to build region-wide collaboration, and unparalleled ability to facilitate unbiased communication and inclusive engagement on issues impacting out industry and region. It does this with tools ranging from its highly effective emails, website, and social media to on-the-ground programs.

Prior to COVID-19 Construction workers already at the top of the charts of industries impacted by opioid abuse, suicide, and mental health issues. This current crisis has compounded the impact on our workers.

I urge you to fund this effort, spearheaded by Construction Forum and supported by a broad-based alliance in our regional community.

Thanks for your consideration.