



**Left to Right:** Richard L. Benbow, General Manager of the Community Development Department which administers the recruitment effort; Rev. Leonard Jackson, from the Mayor's office; Commissioner Valerie Shaw, Board of Public Works, and Workforce Investment Board Director Greg Irish announce results of the one-year old Community Faith Based Construction Initiative.

## BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES CONSTRUCTING LIVES

This month marks the one-year anniversary of Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa's Community Faith-Based Construction Initiative. It's a project, coordinated by the Community Development Department, which relies on clergy and community-based organizations to recruit minorities for the construction trades. Unions and trade groups are working with faith based and community groups to channel recruits into pre-apprenticeship and training programs that will put candidates into solid career opportunities. Statistics indicate that South Los Angeles residents are not benefiting from the vibrant construction boom in the City of



*"Action" Jackson from the Pipe Fitters Union Local 250 tells the crowd that he has seen an increase in women interested in working in the trades.*

Los Angeles and particularly projects that include taxpayer dollars.

The one-year report on the initiative indicates positive results. More than 500 individuals have been placed in jobs in various trades including, pipe fitters, electricians, and ironworkers. The numbers are significant because most of the hiring has taken place in the last six months.

Terrance Edwards has been on the job for two months with Local 11, which is an electricians union. "I came out of the Marines after five years without the type of skills to get a decent

*Terrance Edwards took his lunch break away from his electronics training position in order to speak to group about his experience.*



job," said Edwards, "I heard about the Community Faith Based Construction Initiative. I signed up, took one session of training in order to pass a test that had lots of math and reading. I passed it on the first try. The initiative really helped me start a career."

Community Development Department General Manager, Richard Benbow said, "We worked very hard to get this program off the ground. Each week we meet with the Mayor's staff to measure progress and examine the ways in which we can increase our numbers."

"We are in the process of creating a pipeline for jobs, taking men from the community to jobs," said Valerie Shaw, who sits on the Los Angeles Board of Public Works. Shaw is one of several individuals from various City agencies, who have worked to make the Mayor's initiative more than just promises. The Board of Public Works funds massive public building projects, which use skilled laborers.



*Southeast L.A.-Crenshaw WorkSource Center Manager, Mareta Papu says her center will determine if candidates are eligible for training positions.*

According to labor experts, the average age of construction workers in Los Angeles is 47. It's estimated that over the next 10 years, most will retire, opening up more than 25-thousand jobs.

At the meeting to mark the first year's progress, churches were referred to as "ground zero" in the recruitment and outreach for qualified candidates. Ministers and community organizations were reminded to continue to spread the word about the construction initiative, and to counsel, support and coach young recruits on how to be "job ready."

Job seekers should call the Southeast L.A.-Crenshaw WorkSource Center at 323-730-7900 for more information on the Community Faith Based Construction Initiative.