

Connected Communities Foundation and WinnCompanies Receive National Recognition for Award-Winning Maintenance Apprenticeship Program

2026 NAAEI award recognizes excellence in apartment industry workforce developments



BOSTON, Mass. (June 30, 2026) – Connected Communities Foundation and WinnCompanies announced today that their Maintenance Apprenticeship Program has been named the recipient of the 2026 National Apartment Association Education Institute (NAAEI) Anthony V. Pusateri Comprehensive Program Award. The award was presented during the National Apartment Association's Excellence Awards Apartmentalize in New Orleans.

The Anthony V. Pusateri Awards recognize organizations that promote apartment industry careers through innovative programs and initiatives. Earlier this year, the Connected Communities Foundation and WinnCompanies Maintenance Apprenticeship Program was named one of only three national finalists before ultimately being selected as the winner in the Comprehensive Program category.

Created through a partnership between Connected Communities Foundation and WinnCompanies, the Maintenance Apprenticeship Program addresses critical workforce needs while creating pathways to meaningful careers in multifamily housing. Through paid, hands-on experience, technical instruction, mentorship and industry-recognized credentials, apprentices gain the skills and support needed to succeed as maintenance professionals. Since launching in 2018, the program has graduated 55 maintenance professionals and continues to grow, with 19 apprentices currently enrolled in cohort 6 and recruitment is underway for cohort 7. The current cohort is expected to graduate in early 2027.





"Receiving the Anthony V. Pusateri Comprehensive Program Award is an incredible honor and a testament to what can happen when organizations invest in people and create opportunities for growth," said Mai Dang, president of Connected Communities Foundation. "Together with WinnCompanies, we are proud to be expanding access to meaningful careers, strengthening communities and helping build the next generation of multifamily professionals. This recognition reflects the dedication of everyone who has made the program a success, especially the apprentices who chose to invest in themselves and their futures. As the apartment industry continues to face workforce shortages and high turnover among maintenance professionals, we are proud that the

program is helping address these challenges while achieving an 80% retention rate among participating team members after two years."

The program reflects Connected Communities Foundation's commitment to making a meaningful and measurable difference in the lives of individuals, families and communities, while supporting WinnCompanies' longstanding commitment to workforce development and industry leadership.

"This award demonstrates the power of workforce development to transform lives and address critical talent needs across our industry," said Saraugh Fitah, director of workforce initiatives. "From mentors and supervisors to our industry partners and apprentices, this recognition belongs to the many people who believed in creating pathways to opportunity. Together, we are strengthening the future of multifamily housing and creating lasting economic mobility for individuals and families."

"This national recognition reflects the power of strategic partnerships to address real workforce challenges across the multifamily housing industry," said WinnCompanies CEO Gilbert Winn. "Through the Maintenance Apprenticeship Program, WinnCompanies and Connected Communities Foundation are helping prepare the next generation of skilled maintenance professionals while opening doors to meaningful, long-term careers. It is exactly the kind of innovative, people-centered approach needed to support our communities and strengthen the future of multifamily housing."

About Connected Communities Foundation

The Connected Communities Foundation (CCF) is a private, nonprofit foundation that helps owners of multifamily properties develop and implement collaborative strategies that have measurable, positive effects on the lives of residents of low-income and affordable housing. As one of the nation's largest providers of housing-based supportive services, CCF delivers a collective impact approach to community development, focusing on collaborative strategies that



drive measurable outcomes for individuals and families in six categories: Community Engagement, Economic Mobility, Education, Employment, Health, and Housing. Learn more at connectedcommunitiesfoundation.org.

About WinnCompanies

WinnCompanies is an award-winning owner, developer and manager of high-impact, quality apartment homes, supported by 4,500 team members in 27 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. The company is known as a leading manager of multifamily apartment communities, operating the nation's largest portfolio of affordable housing with a groundbreaking resident services platform. Its community development work focuses on creating and revitalizing mixed-income properties through environmentally sustainable new construction and pioneering adaptive reuse techniques. The company has also been a top manager of privatized housing for members of the U.S. Armed Forces and their families since 2001. Founded in Boston in 1971, WinnCompanies is a family-owned, private company. Learn more at WinnCompanies.com.

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