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## NEWS

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### Palm Beach State student gets GL Homes hard hat tour, \$1K scholarship

By Alex Kushel

Sun Sentinel Correspondent

Palm Beach State College freshman Jeremiah Jean Jacques, an aspiring civil engineering student, recently received an exclusive hard hat tour from GL Homes at its new construction site at Lotus Edge in Boca Raton.

Jean Jacques, who was a longtime participant with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Palm Beach County, also is the recipient of a \$1,000 engineering scholarship from GL Homes.

"GL Homes wants to offer phenomenal opportunities for aspiring engineering students," said Sarah Alsofrom, GL Homes director of community relations.

"If there is a young person out there who wants to be an engineer and they do not know how to do it or the next step to take, we are here for them. We love to see motivated, driven and ambitious young people who want to get into the engineering field. Nothing beats a hands-on hard hat tour and a really immersive experience with GL Homes. It allows this young person to see what his career could be like."

Kelvin Rolle, a freshman at Florida A&M University, received a paid internship this upcoming summer with the engineering team at GL Homes in its land department. Rolle, a Benjamin School graduate and longtime Boys & Girls Clubs of Palm Beach County member, had previously received a hard hat tour with GL Homes at the Valencia Grand construction site in Boynton Beach.

"We hope there is a pipeline with Boys & Girls Clubs of Palm Beach County and GL Homes to bring these aspiring engineering students our way," Alsofrom said.

"We would love to be able to foster the next generation of dynamic engineers. We are thrilled Kelvin has accepted an internship with GL Homes this summer. He is a star and a great success story. We are so proud of him. We want to support Jeremiah and we hope he will follow in Kelvin's footsteps. GL Homes is giving another engineering scholarship to a promising young student."

Chilondra Sheppard, the Boys & Girls Clubs of Palm Beach County corporate partnership director in West Palm Beach, said they support teens who come through their programs.

"Jeremiah was a part of our career-bound program and he wanted to be a civil engineer," she said.

"When the kids can say this is what I want to do, then it's really our job to connect them. We want to connect with corporate partners to really share opportunities with teens about what careers look like. GL Homes is a perfect example of what a partnership looks like. We are hoping that other corporate partners look at the work that GL Homes is doing with us so we can replicate it and more



From left, Chilondra Sheppard (Boys & Girls Clubs of Palm Beach County corporate partnership director), Heather Swanson (GL Homes director of engineering), Jeremiah Jean Jacques and Anthony LoFurno (GL Homes director of land development) on a hard hat tour at Lotus Edge in Boca Raton. TRACEY BENSON PHOTOGRAPHY/COURTESY PHOTOS

kids can have opportunities to have internships and ultimately land jobs."

GL Homes and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Palm Beach County work together on several initiatives throughout the year, including a back-to-school drive and hunger relief.

Jean Jacques, a Glades Central High School graduate, participated in cross country, baseball and basketball. He said a four-year program of engineering classes in high school guided him in his path.

"I was always interested in building things and I was looking into automotive at first," he said. "I really liked engineering at the beginning of high school. I loved everything we did in that civil engineering class in my senior year. I was able to determine that I wanted to take this path and continue to learn more about it."

Jean Jacques also received an internship last summer with Solid Waste Authority of Palm Beach County.

"The internship I was able to get was eye-opening," he said. "It was nice to be in that setting and I liked the environmental aspect a lot and the many jobs that you can do."

Jean Jacques appreciated the support from GL Homes on his path as a civil engineering student at Palm Beach State.

"I am looking for more opportunities to better myself and learn something new," he said. "I am ready to learn more about the construction side. It's very interesting to me."

Jean Jacques started with Boys & Girls Clubs at age 5. He spent several years with the club at Gove Elementary and at the Smith & Moore Family Teen Center of Belle Glade.

"They always were trying to find a way to push us to better ourselves as a person," he said. "It's really up to you to take the help they are giving you."

Jean Jacques' mother, Marie, said her son

has been driven and focused.

"The whole family is proud of Jeremiah and I knew he had a bright future," she said.

"He has worked real hard for it. He can achieve and be anything he wants. My children started at a young age at the Boys & Girls Club. It's a family community and they look after your children. The parents are busy working and it's a place where they can do their activities, schoolwork and get snacks. They are not on the street, which is dangerous and exposed to anything."

GL Homes Director of Land Development Anthony LoFurno and Director of Engineering Heather Swanson both provided the hard hat tour at Lotus Edge.

"We are excited to have Jeremiah join us and to continue his exploration of the engineering and construction world and try to figure out what he wants to do long term," LoFurno said.

"We are glad to be a part of it. It's really cool and neat to see. We are in need of more engineers in this industry. Math and science over the years has not been emphasized as much with kids. When we find someone who has an interest, it's good. The industry has a lot of people retiring and not a lot of new people coming in at the rate I think we need to sustain development and construction. Civil engineering is not as glamorous as biotech and chemical engineering. We really do have a need on the civil engineering side."

LoFurno, who said they started at the Lotus Edge site last summer, added it's expected to take between a year and a half to two years to complete development work. He said they expect to start building homes in the next two months.

"Boca is one of the hottest markets in the country," he said. "We are just happy to go ahead and build another phenomenal community. It's going to be amazing."

Swanson said it was exciting to provide support to an aspiring engineer.



Anthony LoFurno and Jeremiah Jean Jacques at Lotus Edge in Boca Raton.

"It's always fun to have someone that is beginning college to come talk about why they have interest in civil engineering or construction and to hear their story," Swanson said. "I take pride in any support we can provide to them or any questions we can answer because I had similar experiences. Being able to give them an opportunity to see something they may be interested in is really awesome."

Swanson has enjoyed the opportunities provided by GL Homes in the field.

"In construction, it's more male-dominated," she said. "GL Homes takes pride in diversity and giving opportunities to everyone. I started in the field doing inspections and I was the only female out here. Everyone was welcoming and provided all the support needed for me. I have been here 10 years now and I absolutely love it."