

# GRAFTON JOB CORPS

**BUILDING  
FUTURES**



**CHANGING  
LIVES**

Grafton Job Corps Chronicle

April 17, 2026

## Lead the Way

A Special Newsletter for the Grafton JobCorps Leadership Conference.

The Grafton Leadership conference is the newly improved, combined events of Women's and Men's days that Grafton Job Corps has done for years. The spirit of the event has remained unchanged; create an interactive day to address each the challenges our students will have in the workforce, give them the tools to cope with the stresses those challenges may have and make it fun!

This year was an all day event! Starting in the gym with our Keynote Speaker from Uncornered, Francisco De Pina, and moving into other guest from Rissa Care (see pg 2), an Alumni Panel of Job Corps Graduates, and a raffle, students engaged with excellent questions. Chef Green and his Culinary Students were kind enough to provide breakfast at this time as well..



After a delicious lunch, (see pg 5) the students entered their breakout groups, centered around hobbies, stress relief, achieving goals and other skills to be successful.

Grafton Jobcorps is proud to declare this event a huge success and hopes our students are as inspiring to our community as they are to our center.

## Inspiring the Next Generation: A Powerful Message to Young Men at Job Corps

At 1:00 PM during the campus Leadership Conference, a powerful and heart-felt moment unfolded as a speech was delivered to an audience of young men at Job Corps. The room was filled with attention, respect, and anticipation—and by the end, it erupted into a standing ovation.

The speech centered on a message many needed to hear: that every young man in that room has the ability to shape his own future. Speaking from personal experience, chef green emphasized that his journey was not unique or out of reach. He reminded the audience that his story mirrors many of theirs—facing challenges, overcoming obstacles, and continuing to push forward despite adversity.

With honesty and passion, he broke down the idea that success is reserved for a select few. Instead, he reinforced that greatness is attainable for anyone willing to believe in themselves and put in the work. The message was clear: “You can be anything you want to be, if you choose you.”

What made the speech truly impactful was its authenticity. The students didn’t just hear words—they felt them. They saw someone who came from the same place, who understands their struggles, and who stands as proof that success is possible.

As the speech came to a close, the energy in the room shifted. The young men rose to their feet in a standing ovation, not just in appreciation, but in recognition of a message that resonated deeply within them.

Chef Green left the stage with a sense of pride and excitement—not just for the moment, but for the futures of the young men he had just addressed. His belief in their potential was unwavering, and his closing sentiment captured it best: he is truly excited to see what each of them will go on to accomplish.

This was more than a speech—it was a spark. A reminder that leadership begins within, and that the next generation of strong, capable men is already on its way.



## **Uncornered Leader Shares Powerful Message With Students**

A lead speaker from Uncornered addressed the student body, sharing his personal journey and the work he does to help change the mindset of individuals involved in gangs and street violence.

Over more than 15 years with Uncornered, Francisco De Pina has grown from a formerly gang-involved individual within the network to one of the organization's senior leaders. His path reflects the very transformation Uncornered seeks to inspire. Drawing from his lived experience, Francisco spoke about how life on the streets shapes behavior, status, and decision-making—and how those same dynamics can be redirected toward peace and positive leadership.

Now serving as President of Uncornered, Francisco uses his firsthand knowledge to identify and support "Core Influencers"—people with the credibility and influence to shift norms, reduce violence, and lead change within their communities. Previously, he served as Director of Core Influencers, helping to build and expand Uncornered's model across multiple cities.

During his talk, Francisco emphasized Uncornered's core belief: those closest to violence are often closest to the solution. His message encouraged students to rethink assumptions about gang involvement and to recognize the power of lived experience, leadership, and community-driven change.



## **About Rissa Cares**

Rissa Cares is a Black-owned, community-centered organization dedicated to providing culturally responsive, trauma-informed services to marginalized communities. Founded and led by Nerissa, alongside her experienced BIPOC team, the organization is rooted in both lived experience and evidence-based practices. Their work reflects a deep understanding of the complex challenges faced by communities impacted by systemic inequities.

During her talk, Nerissa spoke candidly about mental health challenges and the systemic barriers that often prevent individuals from accessing the care and resources they need. She shared her personal journey of

overcoming these obstacles, emphasizing the importance of resilience, representation, and culturally informed support systems. Her story resonated with audiences by highlighting that healing is not one-size-fits-all and must be grounded in community understanding.



In addition to mental health advocacy, Nerissa discussed entrepreneurship as a powerful tool for empowerment and change. She explained how building Rissa Cares was not only a professional endeavor, but also a response to gaps she saw in traditional systems of care.

Through entrepreneurship, she has been able to create opportunities, uplift voices that are often overlooked, and design services that truly reflect community needs.

## Building Sisterhood and Self-Empowerment Through the Line Game

Ms. Hazzard facilitated a powerful and emotional activity with all of the young women students using The Line Game. This activity is designed to help students become more familiar with one another in a non-threatening and interactive way. Without requiring students to speak, the Line Game allows participants to share personal experiences and recognize commonalities through movement, creating a safe space for reflection and connection.



Throughout the activity, students learned that they are alike in many ways. The experience fostered understanding, empathy, and a deeper sense of unity among the group. Many of the young



women expressed strong emotions as they realized they were not alone in their experiences. The activity reinforced the importance of empowering and embracing one another, emphasizing sisterhood, self-worth, and mutual support.

The session concluded with a meaningful reflection exercise. Each young woman student took a moment to look at herself in the mirror and write

one word that described how she felt in that moment. This act encouraged self-awareness, confidence, and positive self-expression. The activity ended with shared hugs, leaving students feeling supported, validated, and connected.

Overall, the experience was deeply impactful and helped build a strong sense of community, trust, and empowerment among the students.



## Students Choose Soul Food for Leadership Conference

Students almost unanimously voted to bring comfort and culture to this year's leadership conference by selecting soul food as the event's catered meal. The decision reflected a shared desire for hearty, familiar dishes that would bring everyone together while celebrating flavor and tradition.



The conference was catered by Big Belly Barbeque, which delivered an abundant spread that quickly became a highlight of the day. Ms. Halloran and her staff were Attendees enjoyed a variety of classic favorites, including tender barbecue chicken, fall-off-the-bone ribs, and crispy fried chicken. The meal was rounded out with traditional sides such as collard greens, potato salad, creamy macaroni and cheese, and sweet candied

yams, all topped off with freshly baked cornbread.

### Is this a Sweet Treat?

One of the Breakout groups was also a delicious, tried and true way to get through a long day; the sweet treat! The recent cookie decorating event on campus was a huge hit, drawing a packed crowd of students eager to join in on the fun. From the moment it began, the room was filled with energy, creativity, and plenty of excitement.



Students gathered around tables covered in frosting, sprinkles, and all kinds of sweet toppings, ready to turn simple cookies into edible works of art. Laughter and conversation flowed just as freely as the icing, creating a welcoming and lively atmosphere for everyone involved. The event wasn't just about decorating—it was about community. Students had the chance to relax, connect with one another, and enjoy a break from their daily routines. Whether someone was carefully designing a masterpiece or just having fun experimenting with colors and flavors,

everyone left with something they were proud of.

And of course, the best part? The cookies were just as tasty as they looked. From classic designs to over-the-top creations, each one was a delicious reward for the effort and creativity put in. Overall, the cookie decorating event was a sweet success—packed with participants, full of fun, and leaving everyone with smiles (and full stomachs). It's safe to say this is one event students will be excited to see again.



## FROM THE BOOTH TO THE MIC

Renowned Boston DJ and music industry professional DJ Rasheed recently visited Grafton, bringing hands-on music education and inspiration to students through an interactive workshop experience.

A Roxbury native, DJ Rasheed is a versatile entertainer with deep roots in Boston's music scene. He began his career performing alongside local talent and later expanded into DJing under the mentorship of Rusty "The Toe Jammer," also known as Mr. Funky Fresh of Spin City Records and WRBB-FM. He released his first single with the group The Superiors, produced by his uncle Maurice Starr, creator of New Edition and New Kids on the Block.

DJ Rasheed has since built an impressive career, serving as a National Director of Street Teams for major record labels including Bad Boy Entertainment, Atlantic Music Group, Motown, and Def Jam. He is a member of the Worldwide Fleet DJs, Director of Marketing and Promotions for Fleet Radio Nation, and host of The Rasheed Report and Street Squad Mixshow, airing on WUTY 97.9 FM and Hot 96.5 FM. He also serves as the official East Coast tour DJ for artists Glasses Malone and Breeze Dollaz.

During the visit, DJ Rasheed brought professional-grade DJ, podcasting, and audio equipment for students to use firsthand. Students learned the fundamentals of DJing, explored how beats are created, and gained insight into music production. Several students took part in freestyling and singing over live beats, while others collaborated on a mock podcast, practicing microphone use, recording techniques, and on-air presentation.

The session encouraged creativity, confidence, and teamwork, allowing students to experience multiple roles—from performer to producer—while using industry-standard tools.

DJ Rasheed is scheduled to return in the coming weeks to help students launch Grafton's own Panther Radio Station and student-led podcast, continuing his commitment to youth development, media education, and community engagement.





**CAREERS  
BEGIN HERE**

# GRAFTON JOB CORPS IS HIRING!

Adams and Associates is a 100% employee-owned company that is service-focused and outcome-driven. We began as a small business formed in 1990 with the sole mission of operating at-risk youth and children's programs for local, state, and federal governmental agencies. Today, we are one of the largest workforce providers involved in the federal Job Corps program!

Adams and Associates employs more than 2,000 staff members across the United States. Each year we provide academic, vocational training, and placement services to approximately 9,000 young people from ages 16 to 24 primarily in a residential setting. Our academic and career technical training programs are accredited and lead to national industry-recognized credentials.



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TEAP Specialist (11am—  
8pm)

Driver (8am —5pm)

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# Adams Family Fables

*Service Focused, Outcome Driven.*

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## #ShowcasingSuccess

### Championing Cybersecurity



New Hampshire Advanced Security students showed off their cybersecurity chops during Manchester Community College's Cybersecurity Symposium. Students Donjae Booth, Thomas Ebersole, Thomas Nguyen, Angelina Nguyen, Dagem Endazenaw and Christina Nguyen dubbed themselves the "Job Corps 6" as they presented on cell tower dumps. Their presentation, which had tech support from students Zachary Blackwelder and Will Kibuuca, was even featured on WMUR News! When not presenting, the students engaged in symposium themes on how to best utilize AI and Extended Reality technology. Nice job, New Hampshire!

### Conventional Construction

Phoenix UBC Carpentry students help set the stage for the SkillsUSA Arizona State Leadership & Skills Conference at the Phoenix Convention Center. Students dedicated three days to the effort, overseen by their UBC Carpentry Instructor. This initiative reflects the strong partnership between the Job Corps Center and the Convention Center. Perfect work, Phoenix!



### Ladies Leading the Way



Woodland is making ladies part of the Construction conversation, with its recent participation in the "Construction and Conversations" event sponsored by O'Hara Development Partners. The event featured a dynamic panel of women who own and operate state construction companies. Participants toured mixed-use properties, including an exclusive hard hat tour of The Xander, a 19-unit mixed-use property in downtown Baltimore. Students also observed a floor installation demonstration. A highlight of the event was the financial and business guidance provided by Baltimore Community Lending CEO Watchen Harris Bruce. Way to go, Woodland!

### From the President, Susan Sez

It was a Fabulous Financial Fiesta at Adams Columbia Office, as Corporate Finance leaders hosted our annual Finance Training. Finance Managers across our Centers attended to strengthen their skills in accounting, accounts reconciliation, purchasing, financial controls, contract modifications, payroll and critical documentation. Corporate Director of Contracts Accounting and Budgets Latoya Thurman led the training, supported by Corporate leaders Kristy Richford, Debbie Cavathas, Greg Weber, Reuben Horace, Pamela Kelley, Kathleen Loebel, Sarah Drew, Erin Bell and Melody Hays as well as Acumatica Consultant Paige Hodson. Kudos to everyone who helped facilitate this training!

