

From Intern to Advocate: An Energy Efficiency Career is Born



Little did she know at the time, but the summer gig Diamond Jackson landed just before her junior year in college would blossom into an unexpected career in energy efficiency —thanks to stepping stones Ameren Illinois laid along the way.

INTERNS GET SCHOOLED ON ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Jackson's career journey began with the Ameren Illinois Energy Efficiency Internship Program. Launched in 2018, the Program aims to establish a pipeline of diverse, local talent for the growing energy efficiency industry.

"Our goal is to help graduating high school students and career-transitioning professionals secure a full-time position in the energy efficiency industry," says Angie Ostaszewski, Energy Efficiency Advisor at Ameren Illinois. "Our internship program is one way we are helping to build a more robust and diverse energy efficiency workforce in the state of Illinois."

Working with partner organizations, the internship program provides hands-on job training and energy efficiency education to promising students every summer. Interns learn about employment opportunities, receive mentorship from professionals, and build skills that will help them secure a full-time position in energy efficiency — just like Diamond Jackson.

Jackson became one of the first energy efficiency interns with the Springfield branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Her experience as an intern paved the way for her to land a full-time job in May 2020 as the Springfield chapter's Energy Efficiency Liaison.

"With their internship program, Ameren Illinois is giving people from all walks of life a chance to learn about energy efficiency because the company knows how important it is. It was so rewarding to be part of that," says Jackson. "Internships are important because they give students an opportunity to network and develop transferrable skills to use in the workplace."

As it turns out, her own transferrable skills, and the networking she did as an intern, served Jackson well on the next leg of her career journey.

BUILDING THE WORKFORCE OF TOMORROW

During a rewarding tenure at the Springfield NAACP, Jackson helped improve quality of life in her community by teaching people how smart thermostats can help them save on their monthly power bill.

“

Ameren Illinois has been instrumental in jump-starting my career in energy efficiency and helping me reach my full potential.

— Diamond Jackson

”

INTERNSHIP PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS:

- » 59 internships funded since 2018
- » Prepares the next generation for careers in the energy efficiency industry
- » 15-20 promising students gain hands-on education every summer

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS:

- » Removes employment barriers and training gaps
- » Focuses on jobs that provide products and services to improve the efficiency of homes and buildings
- » Placed 30 qualified people in energy efficiency jobs/training programs in 2021

“

Our goal is to build a more robust and diverse energy efficiency workforce in the state of Illinois

— Angie Ostaszewski

”

Eager to continue to learn and grow, Diamond leveraged resources available through Ameren Illinois' Workforce Development Pilot Program to find a place where she could dive deeper into the energy efficiency arena.

Ameren Illinois launched the pilot program in partnership with the Smart Energy Design Assistance Center (SEDAC) and Solutions for Energy -Efficient Logistics (SEEL) to grow and diversify the energy efficiency workforce across its service territory.

“We value diversity in our workplace, our communities — and in the suppliers we do business with. Beginning with internships, we work to build out diversity across the supply chain and develop an interest among diverse members of the community to work in the energy efficiency industry,” says Ostaszewski. “Our Workforce Development Pilot helps to remove employment barriers and training gaps by connecting energy efficiency employers, training programs, community organizations and job seekers.”

Thanks to support she received in her job search, Jackson landed a new position as Outreach Specialist with Walker-Miller Energy Services — a key Ameren Illinois contractor — in the fall of 2021. Today, she works for some of the same people she first met as an intern.

“It was a full circle moment when I got the job at Walker-Miller Energy Services. I never thought I'd be working for the people I met back in 2018. It was a great reminder of how important it is to network and maintain those connections,” says Jackson. “From my internship to where I am now, Ameren Illinois has been so helpful every step of the way. Their team even understood when it was time for me to transition into my next role and helped me find a place where I could grow.”

A NEW PLACE TO SHINE

In her new role, Jackson works with Ameren Illinois and community partners to educate underserved customers about the benefits of energy efficiency and how to take advantage of Ameren Illinois programs and perks.

“Ameren Illinois has so many programs to help people save. Telling people about the resources available to them, and helping them tap into those resources to make their homes more energy efficient, is the best part of my job,” says Jackson. “It's so important to help people understand the power of energy efficiency.”

As she reflects on her career journey, Jackson is grateful for the stepping stones that have led her to where she is today.

“Ameren Illinois has been instrumental in jump-starting my career in energy efficiency and helping me reach my full potential,” she says. “Ameren Illinois programs help so many people, day in and day out, and they've helped me as well. It is awesome to work with a company that is a game-changer in the state of Illinois.”



CONTACT

Angie Ostaszewski

Advisor, Energy Efficiency

Ameren Illinois

aostaszewski@ameren.com



Energy Efficiency
PROGRAM