

APPRENTICESHIP

Gran Phinalé Apprenticeship Academy

Teaching people to become barbers and cosmetologists

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The first time Julius Smith cut someone's hair he was in the 7th grade. His mother owned a wig shop and he worked there after school to make money. He enjoyed the profession and by 18, he had his license to cut hair. Today Julius shares his love and knowledge of this industry as a Barbering and Cosmetology Program Sponsor and Educator through the Gran Phinalé Apprenticeship Academy in Stockton.

"The program allows me to teach my occupation to someone else and that is important because there are people whose life desire is to be a cosmetologist or a barber," said Julius. "I'm the person who helps them become that."

Opened in 2013, Gran Phinalé Apprenticeship Academy has seen 1,500 students complete the apprenticeship program that prepares them to take the state examination to become a licensed barber or cosmetologist.

Julius credits his acquaintance with Shirley McNealy, Chairperson of the California Barbering and Cosmetology Apprenticeship program with getting him involved in providing apprenticeship opportunities to members of his community.

"She was an inspiration and together we not only improved the apprenticeship program for this industry but we also boosted growth in the industry. Apprentices not only became licensed barbers and cosmetologists but also entrepreneurs opening up barbershops and hair salons."

Before the pandemic, Julius says the biggest challenge was keeping on top of changing regulations and getting apprentices to view themselves as professionals and ensuring they work with clients in a safe and sanitary manner. The pandemic has nearly destroyed an industry that focuses on community socializing. "It will be a long time



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before it's business as usual. It is challenging to shave a man with a mask; it has forced us to take our sanitation procedures very seriously."

Julius adds that the Gran Phinalé Apprenticeship Academy is where he will end his career and hopes to leave a legacy for his kids and grandkids who are involved in the program. "What makes me proud is to see individuals become successful with their goals of opening a barbershop or hair salon and be able to financially support their family."