

The Business Diversity Development office will be highlighting the great work of some of our certified companies over the coming weeks. We hope you will enjoy getting to know them as much as we have.

## An Entrepreneur in the Making



Arnez Owens, Owner, Unified Contracting Services

Arnez Owens knows a thing or two about networking and building business relationships. Over a three year period he worked for several companies on construction projects at Lambert-St. Louis International Airport. Projects ranged from carpentry to drywall and interior demolition. One of his first projects was the installation of an eight foot fence around the airport perimeter. "I made a lot of connections with project managers and facility engineers and people just got use to seeing me around," said Owens.

A carpenter by trade, Owens hoped that one day he would start his own construction company. He had the connections and the experience, and he had the confidence to take on a big job. "I saw how others were doing business at the Airport and the type of money they were making and I decided to start my own company," he said.

During his start-up phase, Owens decided to apply for a minority business enterprise (MBE) certification. "It was not as hard as I thought it would be," said Owens.

"There is a lot of paperwork and you must have your financials in order," said Owens.

In 2010, Owens started his company, Unified Contracting Services LLC. The company has three full-time employees and could go up to ten depending on the size of the project.

The following year, Owens received his MBE certification and his company was awarded its first contract at Lambert Airport in the same year. "We were the subcontractor for the demolition project in the luggage carousel and ticketing areas," he said. Other projects included roof repairs after the 2011 tornado, finish and trim work for a restaurant on Concourse C, and several dry wall and interior demolition projects.



Arnez Owens inspects baggage compartment in ticketing area.

While Owens had experience working at Lambert Airport before his success as a business owner, he admits to a few hurdles now that he's out on his own. "You need multiple jobs to pay your employees because subcontractor pay is usually 30 to 60 days and some subcontractors can't wait that long," he said.

"My mind is constantly multi-tasking the logistics of the day from picking up supplies to the

paperwork. But I'm use to long days," he replied.

Owens recently reunited with some of the people who helped him start his business. He attended the 2015 Business Diversity Forum held at Lambert Airport on March 27<sup>th</sup>. It is just one of many events Lambert Airport has planned to help minority and women-owned businesses become certified to do business at the Airport. More information on upcoming events may be found at [www.flystl.com](http://www.flystl.com) or by calling the Business Diversity Development at 314-426-8111.



Arnez Owens in Terminal 1.