

APPRENTICESHIP

*Preserving institutional knowledge while
growing the next generation of talent*



Illustration by Scott Gordon, CAC Chair 2012

CALIFORNIA APPRENTICESHIP COUNCIL

Fourth Quarter 2012

FOCUS ON MISSION ENSURES EFFECTIVE USE OF STATE RESOURCES



Christine Baker, Director,
Department of Industrial Relations

We honor our veterans in California and in the U.S. and welcome them to our apprenticeship programs. We are happy to remember those veterans who have fought for freedom in past wars and those who are dedicated today to support our nation and freedom throughout the world.

End of legislative year

The workers' comp reform bill was signed by Governor Brown on September 18. Emergency regu-

lations will be developed with an implementation date of January 1, 2013.

Governor Brown took a strong interest in seeing this bill get passed. His involvement was key to the successful passage. SB 863, a labor-management effort, which increases benefits and reduces costs, received bi-partisan support. This legislation came about as a direct result of management and labor building the necessary framework for the bill.

The three most important aspects of the legislation include: increased benefits for disabled workers, faster and better quality of medical care as well as the elimination of waste, fraud and unnecessary friction inherent in the liens process. This bi-partisan, comprehensive effort demonstrates the collaborative process inherent in this Administration.

Another important piece of legislation that passed this year was the transfer of apprenticeship public works (PW) enforcement to the Division of Labor Standards Enforcement (DLSE). Division of Apprenticeship Standards (DAS) enforcement staff members were deployed to DLSE and the DLSE PW staff are being trained on the apprenticeship public works laws. DAS will focus largely on developing apprenticeship standards and supporting the programs. Chief Diane Ravnik is moving quickly in the area of green energy jobs and is creating non-traditional apprenticeship programs. California needs skilled workers to remain competitive and grow the economy. As the economy recovers, DAS has the opportunity to contribute to that

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growth by developing the skilled workers to fill those new jobs.

Also this Fall

The PWC 100, replacing the DAS 13, was developed to be electronic for ease by awarding bodies to comply with the labor code that requires them to report when they award a contract. It was up and running January 2012. The enhanced PWC (Public Works Compliance) 100 online application went live on Monday, September 24, 2012. The new features of the enhanced system make it easier to navigate through a more user-friendly environment including new search, auto-population of information on repeat applications, and password features.

Veterans

As California's economy recovers and the demand for skilled workers increases, we cannot forget our veterans returning from service. Apprenticeship is an ideal place for a veteran who has gained comparable skills, but perhaps needs additional training to work in California industries. This CAC newsletter issue is dedicated to just that, veterans entering apprenticeship to find meaningful jobs. DAS is poised to take on that task with a greater, wider number of industries, creating opportunities for a multitude of returning veterans.

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HONOR A VET; HIRE A HERO

November 12th, we celebrate Veteran's Day -- to honor and commemorate the sacrifices of our military veterans. But what about the other 364 days of the year? How do our returning veterans re-integrate into society and find ways to translate their military training, skills, knowledge and experience into civilian employment for themselves and their families?

In recognition of the problems facing California's returning veterans, Governor Jerry Brown established California's "Interagency Council on Veterans" (ICV) -- in which both the Division of Apprenticeship (DAS) and the Labor and Workforce Development Agency (LWDA) participate. The IVC is tasked with identifying and prioritizing the needs of California veterans and coordinating the activities of government in addressing those needs.

Opening up apprenticeship opportunities to our veterans is a priority of the California Apprenticeship Council -- through its Equal Opportunity sub-committee, chaired by CAC Commissioner Anne Quick, who, at its most recent meeting, called for programs to share their "best practices" related to veteran recruitment and hiring, and featured one such program, Bergelectric. The CAC's Forum Committee, chaired by CAC Commissioner Aram Hodess, has an October 2012 CAC "Forum" on the subject of "Employment of Returning Veterans," highlighting a particularly effective program of the United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters operating at Camp Pendleton -- "Veterans in Piping" (VIP).

Outreach to veterans is a top priority of the DAS, as well, as reflected through DAS active participation in the Governor's Interagency Council on Veterans (ICV) and through staff's continuous participation in job and career fairs around the state directed to veterans -- such as the "Navy Region Southwest Fleet" job fair held September 25th and numerous "Honor a Vet - Hire a Hero" career fairs held regularly around the state. In the SF Bay Area, WEBCOR Builders established a special committee, in which the DAS and the Bay Area Apprenticeship Coordinators Association participates, to attract and recruit veterans to work on construction of San Francisco's new "Transbay Transit Center." As

California's apprenticeship community can recognize the great contributions our California servicemen and women have made to our country

part of this effort, WEBCOR recently hosted a career fair held at the USS Hornet in Alameda -- to name just a few events in which the DAS and numerous JATCs and other apprenticeship program sponsors regularly participate.

One organization especially designed to assist returning veterans find a career in the building and construction trades, through registered apprenticeship programs, is the national non-profit "Helmets to Hardhats." Established in 2003 to link veterans to training programs in the construction



Diane Ravnik, DAS Chief

trades, H2H works with local joint apprenticeship committees (JACs) to expedite and facilitate the process of applying for and entering local apprenticeship programs in a wide variety of construction crafts. Some local apprenticeship programs are able to award preference points or credit for veteran's service in their selection procedures; other programs may provide direct entry for veterans through veteran-focused pre-apprenticeship programs. And, of course, after entry into a registered apprenticeship program, all veterans are eligible to receive their Montgomery Bill G.I benefits.

In all these ways, apprenticeship and California's apprenticeship community can recognize the great contributions our California servicemen and women have made to our country and the many contributions these veterans can still make, in the future, to building California's economy and a bright future for themselves and their families.

MY LAST ADDRESS AS CHAIRMAN OF THE CAC



Scott Gordon, CAC 2012 Chair

I would like to thank everyone for their support and accomplishments this year. This has truly been a very rewarding experience for me, as I have had to grapple with issues in a different state of mind than I am normally accustomed. Although there is still much work ahead of us, I am proud to have worked with a group of individuals who believe in change for the advancement of our workforce. I will take this opportunity to present a few more thoughts for our Council to ponder.

For the last year, our community has focused on creating jobs and increasing the opportunities available to the disenfranchised. When we speak of the disenfranchised, in relation to the apprenticeship community, we think of minorities, women and youth at risk who lack the resources necessary to make an honest living. More specifically, our Council has also focused on our veteran populations who return from duty to their families and loved ones in search of a livable wage. More often than not, we find that veterans return with minimal documentation, certifica-

tions and credentials to show as evidence of their military training which, in turn, greatly affects their job accessibility. During such a critical period in time, we have to wonder why programs such as Helmets to Hard Hats have diminished. Helmets to Hard Hats was one of the few support programs for veterans and the contractors who reap the benefits of a skilled veteran. These types of programs should not simply disappear.

Quite often we find that veterans who have had experience in the military with driving commercial vehicles do not possess a Class A license. Much like Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT), these individuals are not receiving the documentation required that provides marketability. More importantly, as veterans return from duty they find themselves relocating out of State due to the cost of living in California. Inevitably, we lose this population because we are not able to provide them with sustainable jobs. In a community with so many contractors eager to help, our veterans should not be suffering for our shortcomings. We have to ask ourselves why service men and women do not have the necessary support needed to obtain jobs within our communities. As an apprenticeship program that graduated the first Helmets to Hard Hats veteran in the country (Steven Fox, 2004 graduate, working for Rudolph & Sletten, Inc.) the Laborers, their staff and their employers celebrate the accomplishments of our war heroes and strive to provide them with endless opportunities.

There is a lot of work ahead of us. As I work to service our con-

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tractors, I find that they are often targeted for not meeting specific requirements. Most recently, I was contacted by a prominent attorney representing a signatory contractor who was working at a military base. I was informed that his company had been targeted for not meeting a minority ratio; Native Americans and Women. The mere thought that there are contractors who fail to pay prevailing wages or adhere to Shelley-Maloney Apprenticeship Requirements is proof that there needs to be an equal benchmark for all contractors; signatory and non signatory. I have committed myself to looking into this matter and assisting in any way that may make a difference. The goal key is to continue working with our contractors in building strong relationships that make for effective problem solving.

Again, I thank all of our committee members and chairs for their support and hard work. As we continue to tackle each hurdle before us, let us not forget about those who need a voice. I will treasure this experience for a lifetime and wish our California Apprenticeship Council the utmost success in all future endeavors.

ONE CONTRACTORS COMMITMENT TO HIRING VETERANS

When our country's veterans are returning to civilian life there are numerous issues they must face. They must secure housing for themselves and their families, decide to pursue a college degree or go into the work force. For veterans who opt to enter the building trades through a registered apprenticeship program, the process may be even more confusing. Most of us are aware of the good work that is being done by the program Helmets to Hardhats but what most of us do not know is that many veterans are not aware of the program.

A few months ago I was contacted by Ted Huang; a Project Manager with Webcor Builders. Ted's company has assigned him to coordinate the hiring of veterans on Webcor projects. Webcor's President has made a commitment to hire veterans. Ted was experiencing what many of our veterans go through when they seek to find employment in the construction industry. There seems to be a disconnect between the various agencies who work with veterans. Most apprenticeship programs have different intake procedures for

veterans. For example some offer direct entry while others may give veterans a higher ranking on their applicant list. Then there is the challenge of getting the veteran on the actual jobsite once they get into the apprenticeship program.

What quickly became apparent is that there is a need to create a pipeline for veterans wishing to enter the building trades in Northern California. In July Webcor and the Carpenters Training Committee for Northern California hosted a working group focused on aiding veterans. Our goal was to have the different agencies meet with each other and begin mapping a strategy for streamlining the intake process. Three of the Bay Areas Local Workforce Investment Boards attended, as well as agencies such as Swords to Plowshares, the Employment Development Department, representatives from the DAS and the coordinator's associations, as well as, a representative from the Carpenters Local Union 22, San Francisco, CA. The group mapped out the most common barriers for veterans entering apprenticeship as well as solutions for many of the challenges. Through network-

ing and creating individual task forces the hope is to create a more seamless process for the men and women who have served our country.

As a result of our first meeting Webcor has started the process for hiring three veterans on the Trans Bay Terminal Project in San Francisco, CA. The group will continue to meet and work to create best practices for helping veterans entering the building trades. The timing could not be better. Over the past year the increase in work opportunities for construction workers has increased dramatically. I would like to personally acknowledge companies such as Webcor who have made a commitment to hiring veterans. The goal for all of us who work in apprenticeship should be to duplicate their efforts and ensure positive outcomes for the men and women who have sacrificed so much for our country. If you have an interest in joining the Veteran's Task Force please contact me, Paula Reza at (559) 554-7084. We are seeking partners in both northern and southern California.

by Paula Reza

Apprentice Spotlight

Taylor Alanis served in the Navy for three years. As a veteran he was able to join the Carpenters Union in Fresno California. He is a first year apprentice. When interviewed Taylor explained that he heard about the trades through friends and family. He was not aware that his status as a veteran could grant him direct entry into the carpenters apprenticeship program. Although Taylor served as a Master of Arms in the Navy he was not drawn to police work when he was discharged. He entered the trades because of the normal work hours and the challenges of building. He is happy with his choice and looks forward to completing his apprenticeship.

Taylor Alanis



CAMP PENDLETONS VETERANS IN PIPING

A Department of Labor report stated that in 2010, the average unemployment rate among returning veterans was 11.5 percent, which is one in 10 of our nation's heroes who can't find a job. William Hite, General President of the United Association (commonly called the Plumbers Union or the "UA") had a vision to create a program that would provide these very deserving Servicemen and women an opportunity for a great career as members of the UA. As President Hite has said many times, 'No veteran who fought for our country should have to fight for a job when they come home!'

"I see this as the future for all branches of the military; this is the way transitional training needs to be done. It is the standards that our program has established that have become the benchmark for all to follow."

The Camp Pendleton Veterans In Piping (VIP) welding program operates out of the welding training trailers that have called Camp Pendleton home for the past several years. The Camp Pendleton VIP program has graduated 12 classes of highly skilled welders. All in all, with multiple programs of its kind across the United States, the UA has provided over 300 servicemen and women with a lifelong career in the UA through its VIP programs.

Mike Hazard, Executive Director of the Southern California Pipe



Trades Apprenticeship and Journeymen Training Trust Fund and the liaison for the UA VIP program at Camp Pendleton, stated, "At Camp Pendleton, the UA has established a proven model for placing transitioning Marines in high paying careers. I see this as the future for all branches of the military; this is the way transitional training needs to be done. It is the standards that our program has established that have become the benchmark for all to follow." United States Marine Corp Major General Matthew Caulfield (retired) emphatically stated, "It is simply a fact, there is no other corporation, union, or organization that can match what the UA is doing for members of the Armed Forces."

"The UA has kept the VIP program small and manageable, running three classes of 16 per year," Hazard added. "This has allowed us to keep our promise

to the Marines participating in the program, which is, if you successfully complete the program you will be given direct entry into an apprenticeship program, and you will be given one year of advancement starting as a second-year apprentice.

We have kept our promise to the leadership of the Marine Corps, which is, if you let us come on your base and train your transitioning Marines, we will provide them with a lifelong career. We have also kept our promise to our contractors, and they have delivered. We have provided the Marines with the highly skilled training that our contractors require, and they, in turn, have played the most critical role of all—they have put our VIPs to work."

The VIP program has been viewed, without exception, as the most effective transitional program in the Department of

For the first time in U.S. history...

Defense Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis, U.S. Representatives Filner and Davis, the Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) and numerous dignitaries have visited the site and commented on it. All were unanimous in their praise and have given their recommendation to expand the program. “I had the opportunity to see firsthand the Veterans In Piping program at work at the new Naval Hospital at Camp Pendleton,” stated Congressman Bob Filner (D-CA, 51st District). “It confirmed my view that this is a model program that should be widely replicated. What makes this program unique is that it trains Marines in a certifiable skill, and assists graduates to ensure they have the network and connections to find a job when they are discharged.”

Corporal Alex Parker, one of the VIP graduates, stated he heard about the program through word of mouth. He loves to weld, and he knew it would be a great fit. The benefits offered with the UA were instrumental in Alex’s decision to enroll in the VIP program. He stated, “Most of my friends had to move in with their parents. I am the only one, of the folks I know, who started a real career. I have friends who graduated from



college who are still doing temporary work. I have bought a house that I will be moving into this week. You can’t beat that.”

Corporal Tim Cadwell, another VIP graduate, added, “It was easy to transition out. I was well prepared and well trained. From day one, I learned way more than I thought I would. Every new job has a learning curve, but I work with some great guys, so even that was minimized. For me, I truly believe that this job, this union, saved my life. I was in the VIP program when my wife got very sick. Everyone was really supportive through all of that. The brotherhood in the union was critical for me through my transition and through those rough times. I know for a fact that if

We have kept our promise to the leadership of the Marine Corps, which is, if you let us come on your base and train your transitioning Marines, we will provide them with a lifelong career.

I had had a different job, they would never have been that supportive, and I would have probably lost my job. I can’t imagine where I would be right now if that had happened. Instead, I am financially independent, which is huge. Things are looking up.”

For the first time in U.S. history, we have opened the door to allow service personnel to participate in apprenticeship training programs while still on active duty. This is what the UA VIP program is all about—providing high-skill training to returning servicemen and women while they are still on base, which is critical because it facilitates an efficient, seamless transition and return to private-sector life.

Apprentice Statistics For the quarter ending September 30, 2012

Number of active apprentices	54,056
Number of new registrations and reinstatements	4,014
Number of active women apprentices.....	3,353
Percent of active apprentices represented by women	6.2%
Percent of active apprentices represented by minorities	50.2%

HOW IS CTE DELIVERED TO CALIFORNIA'S K12 STUDENTS?



John Dunn, Educational Programs Consultant, California Department of Education

One of the main components of a quality Career Technical Education program is connections to industry as well as leadership training. Throughout the country, students in CTE programs also participate in what are known as Career Technical Student Organizations, or CTSOs. Many of you may be familiar with the Future Farmers of America (FFA) or the Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), both well-established CTSOs. But the CTSO that impacts the Building Trades and other areas that lead to Apprenticeship programs the most is SkillsUSA. (www.skillsusa.org)

A part of California schools since 1965, SkillsUSA (once known as VICA) has provided leadership training to students and instructors in the career and technical education sectors such as welding, auto repair, carpentry, electrical, drafting/CAD, culinary and others. SkillsUSA California has chapters statewide in both the K12 system as well as the Community College system.

With three levels of skill and leadership competition, SkillsUSA encourages growth through participation in the leadership and skill activities to enhance classroom learning. Students learn important leadership skills such as how to run a meeting, coordinate community service efforts and are able to run for statewide and



national offices. SkillsUSA California membership has grown again in 2011-12 to over 5,100 members. This is the second highest membership total in the history of SkillsUSA California and has been the largest growth percentage nationwide for 2 years running.

The California Department of Education holds the statewide charter for SkillsUSA California and the State Director is Clay Mitchell, from the CDE. Recently, several apprenticeship programs participated in the creation of new Technical Committees as industry experts in carpentry, electrical, welding, plumbing and even firefighting. These Technical Committees establish the criteria for the regional and state contests in those industry areas so that SkillsUSA students are tested and compete using current industry practices.

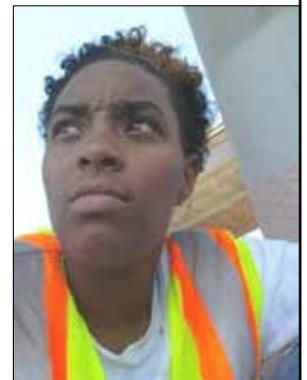
You can learn more about how to become involved in SkillsUSA California by contacting Clay Mitchell through the SkillsUSA California website: www.skillsusaca.org or on Twitter @caskillsusa or even on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SkillsUSACalifornia> (or by contacting John Dunn jdunn@cde.ca.gov)

Apprenticeship Spotlight

"I came into this trade not really knowing what to expect but once I started my job I fell in love with everything this career is about. It gives me a chance to debunk the myth "It's a man's world."

"I love walking into my class or job knowing I can do everything a man can do. Coming into class I'm ready to learn as much as I can and continue to prove people wrong. I work not for the money but for the pride I get knowing I held my own."

Victoria Ewing



MEETING GLOBAL ECONOMY CHALLENGES



Van Ton-Quinliven, California Community Colleges Vice Chancellor of Workforce & Economic Development

I traveled to Washington, D.C., on August 1st for the 75th anniversary of the National Apprenticeship Act and attended my first meeting as a new appointee of the National Advisory Committee on Apprenticeship. Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis recently announced me as one of six new appointments along with 21 reappointments.

Registered Apprenticeship is a proven model – whether non-union or union – for closing the skills gaps. Demand-driven training combines on-the-job learning, classroom instruction, and mentoring, while earning a paycheck and providing valuable labor for an employer. Registered Apprenticeship is a career pathway that leads to higher-paying and higher-skilled opportunities benefitting both apprentice and employer. These programs offer employers an important way to elevate the competencies of their workers and establish the standards of proficiency that both employers and workers need to compete in our increasingly competitive world economy.

Stating that it is time to rethink post secondary education options, a recent report by Harvard University says that it is time for a sharpened focus on career and technical education in general, and on apprenticeship specifically. “The nation’s registered apprenticeship programs are a well kept secret” and points out that some people “learn best in structured programs that combine work and learning”, according to the Pathways to Prosperity: Meeting the Challenge of Preparing Young Americans for the 21st Century report from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

The Urban Institute summary of a report by the Center for American Progress entitled Community College and Apprenticeship as Collaborative Routes to Rewarding Careers echoes this viewpoint. “Since apprenticeship openings depend on employer demand, mismatches between skills taught and supplied and skills demanded in the workplace are unusual. Apprentices learn in the context of real work settings and attain not only occupational skills but other work related skills including communication, problem-solving, allocating resources, and dealing with supervisors and a diverse set of coworkers.”

We are all being challenged to operate in a global economy where technology has enabled relationships and cycle times that never were feasible previously. To remain competitive in this increasingly ‘flat’ world, our industries need workers with the highest skills and competencies. Employers can rely upon Registered Apprenticeship to produce workers

with in-demand skills. We within the California Community College Division of Economic and Workforce Development will continue our efforts to engage stakeholders in these valuable programs.

Another pathway to putting Californians back to work and filling the multitude of job openings is The Veteran Skills to Jobs Act, approved by Congress and signed by President Obama, enacted on July 23rd of this year. The legislation states that federal agencies must treat military training as sufficient to qualify troops for federal licenses or certification.

“If you are a (person) in charge of a platoon or millions of dollars of equipment and are taking responsibility, or you’re a medic out in the field who is saving lives every single day, when you come home, you need to be credentialed and certified quickly so you can get on the job,” Obama said.

The California Community Colleges “I Can Afford College” program targets and supports veterans as they transition from public service to private sector jobs.

Student veterans can receive VA Benefits as well as Federal and State financial aid to assist with covering college expenses. Most California Community Colleges have Veterans Resource Centers available - one-stop shops where peer mentors are available to assist new students with information on programs for student veterans, including financial aid. As the state’s largest provider of affordable career training, the California Community Colleges can give veterans an education that enhances existing skills towards fast tracking to a rewarding job. Visit ccco.edu to learn more.

BERGELECTRIC SUPPORTS VETERANS

Faced with a shortage of field employees and a limited number of new apprentices getting into the trade, Bergelectric Corporation launched an aggressive plan in 2005 to hire as many veterans as they could. “Being surrounded by military bases made this possible; Southern California sees 30,000 veterans get released from active duty every year and not all find work,” explains Frank Boecker, HR Manager for Bergelectric.

Bergelectric has other reasons to hire veterans. “The military has done a wonderful job in preparing their veterans for the civilian world. They return with incredible work ethics, high standards, and the desire to get the job done,” says Boecker. “Our goal has been to hire at least one veteran a week.” Bergelectric’s efforts to hire veterans have been so successful that in 2011 the State of California Employment Development department awarded Bergelectric “Employer of the Year.”

Boecker mentions David Thomas, Bergelectric employee and WECA apprentice, as an example of one of the outstanding veterans they’ve recruited. Thomas’ transition from military life to apprenticeship was serendipitous. “Four months after discharge, I met a gentleman in the electrical aisle at Home Depot,” Thomas says. “His son had just entered boot camp and had the same occupation I had in the military. As we conversed, he asked me whether I’d be interested in a position with Bergelectric and an



apprenticeship. Three days later, Frank Boecker called. Because I was already attending Miramar College, he said that WECA

“After being with Berg for only 6 months, I was recalled into the military to deploy again for another 8. Berg was very understanding about the matter. Working for Berg, I’m still able to give to back to the Marine Corps.”

would be the best option for me. He was absolutely correct. The smaller class sizes allow me to have more one-on-one time with the instructors. And attending

apprenticeship classes every six months allows me to still attend night classes at college.”

“Bergelectric eased my transition from military to civilian life,” Thomas continues. “After being with Berg for only 6 months, I was recalled into the military to deploy again for another 8. Berg was very understanding about the matter. Working for Berg, I’m still able to give to back to the Marine Corps. Currently I’m working on Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, building the new Naval Hospital. It’s the greatest feeling to help build a hospital for the marines and sailors that you served beside.”

Bergelectric attends numerous local careers fairs focused on hiring veterans. They also partner with EDD, Veterans Village of San Diego and Marine Corps family service. Boecker adds, “We work very closely with WECA, AGC, and ABC to train these veterans. With the help of Veterans Village, they get everything they need to start their new career, from tools to work clothes; all are paid for by the Call of Duty Endowment started by the video game manufacturer to support our veterans.”

“I am privileged by Bergelectric’s willingness to support these veterans,” Boecker says in closing. “I served in the armed services myself and feel a duty and responsibility towards them. Almost every day I have a new veteran in my office talking about opportunities in apprenticeship and their new career as a Bergelectric employee.”

A HIGH SCHOOL INTERNSHIP LEADS TO APPRENTICESHIP

WECA first-year VDV (Voice Data Video) apprentice Tyler Meyer got an intensive preview of apprenticeship while still a high school student, thanks to an innovative after-school program. “ROP was a high school after-school program for construction technology. It was a class to teach us new ways and new technologies in the construction trade,” Tyler explains. “My teacher Steve Dolan got me an internship at WECA. I started being mentored by (WECA Apprentice Instructor and Lab Manager) Jimmie Slep. Jimmie saw that I quickly became fascinated with electricity. He began showing me basic labs to get me started. After a couple months he started to teach me more theory and more difficult

labs. Soon I was bending pipe, wiring motor controls, and after that I was hooked!”

Jimmie Slep shares how Tyler was chosen for the internship. “I had to interview two ROP students, and choose one. When Tyler walked into the lab, I saw his face light up a little bit, as if he saw the possibilities.” Jimmie goes on, “Over time, I became impressed with his ability to figure things out— if he didn’t know how to do something, he would find an example of a working model, and he’d just go over and check it out. He took a lot of initiative to ask questions and learn.”

Commercial electrical work wasn’t the only topic to catch Tyler’s fascination as he continued with his internship at WECA. He soon became curious about telecommunications as well. “I started talking with (VDV Program Manager and Instructor) Steve Jatala in the halls about where our future was going with technology; it sparked something new in me. Not knowing anything about how a phone worked, or what fiber optic cable was, pushed me to want to learn more about voice and data.”

Soon, Tyler got his chance in the growing field of voice-data-video. “I was offered a job opportunity by a great company-- they actually offered me the job before I was even out of high school.” He knew he was at a decision point— take this opportunity to become a VDV apprentice, or wait and try to secure an electrical apprenticeship? He had a keen interest in both. But, “I chose the great opportunity that was given to me to go into VDV. Fiber optics has been the most interesting subject to me. Fiber is our future and the things I’ve learned about it-- what we can do with it and what it’s capable of-- are beyond anything I could have imagined. Also, being able to splice a tiny piece of glass, and make it push data through it, is just cool to me.”

Tyler’s transition from high school internship to career-building apprenticeship has been a successful one. Steve Jatala confirms, “Tyler has come a long way. As an intern, he was green and didn’t know much, but was always wanting and willing to learn. He has now developed into one of the top apprentices in his class. His hard work and dedication to learn has made him a valuable asset to his contractor and the industry.”



