

APPRENTICESHIP

Apprenticeships are Vital to Growth in Kern County

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To coincide with National Apprenticeship Week last November, the Kern County College District held their annual Student Apprentice workshop. For the past three years, this workshop has helped educate high school students about the opportunities available for well-paying jobs in the skilled trades through apprenticeship. Over 300 Kern County students and their counselors attended two days of workshops at the NECA/IBEW Electrical Training Center in Bakersfield, which included hands-on demonstrations with a variety of trade crafts, plus panel discussions.



A high school student drills drywall to metal studs at the Student Apprentice workshop during National Apprenticeship Week.

Kern County continues to grow and prosper and the demand for workers has increased. Roads and bridges are a major source of that employment growth, and this is due in part to the passing of Senate Bill 1 (SB 1), or the Road Repair and Accountability Act. Several major construction projects, such as the China Lake Earthquake Reconstruction, Lake Isabella Dam Retrofit or the High-Speed Rail, will need skilled and trained workers and that's where apprenticeship comes in.

Privately-funded local joint apprenticeship and training committees (JATCs) offer nationally-recognized and certified programs that use state-of-the-art curricula. The Building Trades and their signatory contractors invest more than \$1 billion annually in journey-level training and apprenticeship. This doesn't include tens of millions invested by the JATCs in equipment and training facilities.

Participants in state-approved apprenticeship programs can earn about \$15 or more an hour, plus benefits. The rate increases each year until training is complete and a participant becomes a journeyman, earning about \$25 or more an hour, plus health and pension benefits.

Apprenticeship programs are a solution to the turnover caused by skilled workers retiring. Encouraging the new generation of workers to pursue careers in the trades is critical to the economy and future of Kern County. With apprenticeships, our skilled tradespeople will work to help shape a vital part of that future.