



Student Profiles

S U M M I T A C A D E M Y O I C T R A I N I N G F O R L I F E !

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STUDENT PROFILES—Pre-Apprentice Electrical Program

The Skills They Need to Spark Their Dreams

by Sarah Snider

They are white, black and Latino. One student is still in high school. Another is married with children. One is a single mother looking for a way to support her son. Another student wants to expand his family's business, while another wants to launch a construction business with his brother.

Summit Academy OIC's first Pre-Apprentice Electrician class is a group with dreams and goals. Each student comes from a different place, but all have plans for their futures and a desire for better lives for themselves and their families. The education they receive at Summit and Dunwoody College of Technology will give them the tools they need to make their dreams into attainable goals.

Jamal Ray

Jamal Ray says that, without Summit's program, he would likely be in jail today. "I was a little wild," he confesses. Ray was working at temporary jobs and trying to stay out of trouble. He came to Summit because he wanted to make more money to pursue his goals, and doing temp work was "not going about it the right way."

Summit Academy, Ray says, changed his whole frame of mind. Summit's

instructors helped Ray and his classmates understand the basics of carpentry and held them to high standards of achievement. He notes with pride that he now knows how to build a house from the basement up.

Ray plans to go on to earn a degree in business while working as an electrician. He says of the program, "It's the best thing you can do. The worst thing is not trying at all."

Nicole Cochran

Before attending Summit, Nicole Cochran was studying traditional Chinese medicine and shiatsu massage. As a single mother, she was hoping to become self-employed in order to support herself and her son. She soon realized that building a referral-based business could take years—years that her family could not wait. When a friend told her about Summit's Pre-Apprentice Electrician program, she saw that it offered a way to take care of her family while pursuing her entrepreneurial goals.

In addition to the carpentry and electrical coursework, Cochran says she benefited from the life skills classes and finance classes she took with Summit instructor Sonja Simpson.

Summit's program provides students with a lot of information in just five months, making it "a good choice for a single mom."

Kenneth Kidd, Jr.

Kenneth Kidd, like many of Summit's young adult students, had an unstable home life and was struggling in high school. His uncle told him about Summit Academy's Post-Secondary Enrollment Option program, which would allow him to earn his high school diploma while studying a trade. Kidd decided to take a chance on the program in order to put his life onto a positive, productive path.

Kidd enjoyed his hands-on carpentry coursework and blueprint reading classes. He notes proudly, "I didn't know what a blueprint was before I started. Now, I can pretty much sketch a house." All of Summit's instructors took an interest in his success. In particular, Kidd says that instructor Gary Courtney gave him confidence in

himself. Courtney gave Kidd good advice and helped him study every day after school.

Kidd now looks forward to joining the electrician's union and getting a good

job. He says that the program is a great experience, but “you have to be dedicated. You have to want to be there. It’s something to better your life if you don’t have anything.”

Dan Marlow

Dan Marlow came to Summit looking for training in a field where he could work with his hands. He learned about Summit through a JobCorps program; the head of his training program recommended that he enroll in Summit’s program in order to continue his technical education. Marlow enjoyed the hands-on experience he received at Summit. He notes proudly that he had been “fearful” of the aptitude tests required for entrance into Dunwoody, but thanks to his preparation at Summit, he scored extremely well.

In the future, Marlow hopes to own his own business. Without the training he received at Summit and Dunwoody, he says that he would probably be “working in maintenance or other dead-end jobs.” He says that Summit’s programs prepared him well for the coursework at Dunwoody and for his future career.

Ramon Garcia

Like many Summit students, Ramon Garcia learned about Summit through a word-of-mouth referral. A friend completed Summit’s Pre-Apprentice Plumbing program and now works as an apprentice plumber. Garcia says that this friend’s progress inspired him to “get on my feet” and change the course of his life. If his older friend could turn his life around, he

Summit Academy OIC's first Pre-Apprentice Electrical students have diverse backgrounds and goals. They all share the common desire to acquire the skills needed to make their dreams into reality.

reasoned, Garcia decided that it was not too late to change his own situation.

Garcia had previously enrolled in a two-year electrician training program but was frustrated by the length of time he would have to spend in school before he could begin working. Summit’s 20-week program appealed to him because it allowed him to begin working as an apprentice much sooner.

When the class graduates and Garcia completes his five-year apprenticeship, he plans to expand the family business to include an electrical division. Eventually, he hopes to work with his uncle, developing condominiums and townhouses. Without the training he received at Summit and Dunwoody, Garcia says he would be “chasing dead-end jobs” and struggling to pay his bills. He considers the program a great opportunity for an individual who is focused and “ready to do something with your life.”

David Green

David Green had first-hand experience with Summit’s program. He had been enrolled in Summit’s carpentry program a few years ago when he and his fiancée discovered that they were expecting a child, forcing Green to drop out and find employment. This time, the time was right for him to pursue his education. “They always welcome you back,” he says of Summit.

Gary Courtney, Summit’s blueprint reading instructor, was a high school classmate of Green’s. Seeing his former classmate working successfully as a teacher and in his own business inspired Green to “go for it.” In addition to math, carpentry and framing, Green learned how to work well as part of a team.

Without Summit’s electrical program, Green says that he would still be working in maintenance, which he calls “repetitive and boring.” Now, he has plans to start a construction business with his brother, who graduated from Summit’s carpentry program, and plans to give back to the community.

About the Program

Summit's Pre-Apprentice Electrical students begin with ten weeks of training at Summit Academy, where they learn the basics of construction, including safety, hand and power tools and blueprint reading. Summit also offers coursework in personal finance, professional behavior and other life skills needed to keep a job and advance professionally. President and CEO Louis King says, "We don't ask anyone to lower the standards for our students." Summit provides the highest possible quality of education while addressing the needs of our student population.

The remaining ten weeks take place at Dunwoody, learning electrical safety, hand and power tools, print reading, basic electricity, electrical math and the specific skills of the electrical trade through hands-on projects. The course ends with two weeks of on-the-job training with an electrical contractor.

After students complete their coursework at Dunwoody, they will take the entrance exam to be admitted into the electricians' union. Summit Academy placement counselors are available to students to help them find jobs and train them in the skills they need to keep those jobs. From there, the sky is the limit as Summit's students make their dreams into reality.

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