



apprenticeship: another career opportunity

FOR those of us entrenched in the electrical industry, it is obviously apparent that the reality of the shortfall in today and the future workforce is staggering at best. The IEC and similar organizations dedicate themselves to preparing young men and women to be the next leaders of our industry. But still, with over 10,000 apprentices registered in apprenticeship programs and working for member contractors, our industry is slowly approaching a crisis mode. Around the country and within each Chapter of the IEC, the topic of workforce development is of the utmost importance. Most importantly though is how we take this topic, and what we know to be the best solution for workforce development, and reach out to those entities that are harboring the future of our industry.

It all begins with a commitment. Apprenticeship is just that, an agreement between parties, that everyone is an integral part in ensuring that the future infrastructure is developed with the highest level of skill, training

and knowledge to continue on the future of this important trade. For those that are up to the challenge, apprenticeship offers an opportunity to embark upon not only a career path, but an educational opportunity that is unparalleled. No other schooling, internship or work-study program will provide an individual with paid, on-the-job training, related instruction and an environment that promotes excellence through encouragement and reward. Apprentices begin a program that is structured in all aspects. From beginning to the end, apprentices are aware of their exact course of action, what is required of them to progress from one level of training to the next, and a wealth of resources to ensure that success is met along the way. Incentives are offered throughout the program in the form of regular and substantial wage increases; therefore apprentices are constantly motivated to continue their efforts. For those considering apprenticeship, or for those who have the unique opportunity to have an influence on the decision of another, apprenticeship offers

an individual with little or no experience an opportunity to enter into a dynamic industry. The wages are extremely competitive with, and in many cases, exceed those of other entry level positions. Additionally, with the completion of the apprenticeship program, it guarantees the individual a skill in a trade that no one can remove.

For years, apprenticeship has been coined by many involved as the "Other 4-Year Degree" and in many cases it's true. Because an apprenticeship program is so essentially tied to education, apprentices are often completing not only their required apprentice classes, but receive college credits as well. Many IEC Chapters around the country have agreements with local colleges offering apprentices a path to an Associates degree and beyond. An apprenticeship completion certificate, our version of the college diploma, is transferable and recognized across the country via the American Council on Education (ACE). As the electrical industry has evolved so has the IEC. Chapters now offer diverse 2 and 3 year Low Voltage

apprenticeship: another career opportunity (continued)

Apprenticeship Programs in addition to the traditional 4-year Electrical Apprenticeship Program. Not only do apprenticeship programs focus on the educational aspect, but equally important is that the apprentices receive on the job training. Additionally, apprenticeship programs typically have funding available from the industry sponsoring it. This means apprentices "earn while they learn". Also what makes apprenticeship so attractive is that apprentices are not faced with the burden of the high cost of today's college pricing and placing themselves in an overwhelming position that upon graduation they owe a great deal in student loans. Apprenticeship programs have state of the art curriculum, instructors who come from the industry, and hands-on training in the classroom with labs that foster an environment that is unparalleled by other vocational training.

So why, with all the benefits that apprenticeship has to offer, would organizations such as IEC, be struggling to attract enough

young people into the electrical industry? All misconceptions aside, those of us that are involved in apprenticeship programs at its very roots, simply believe that it is the best kept secret out there. This belief of "we never heard of...", supports our cause to educate teachers, counselors, parents, students and anyone else who will listen about the opportunities that the IEC and apprenticeship are providing around the country. It will be through this education of awareness that a new generation of the workforce will leave the K-12 school system, inclusive of public, private and charter schools, and have apprenticeship in the forefront of their minds. No longer will apprenticeship be looked at as an avenue for those not cut out for the 4-year university, military or community college. Rather apprenticeship needs to be understood as a hybrid of training and education that has strong bonds with not only accredited educational institutions, but the military as well. It is a career path for those committed to its cause, supported by organizations

committed to excellence in education and training, and made possible by an industry that has a dire need for skilled employees at all levels.

For whatever reasons an individual leaving High School chooses not to go to college, there are proven and successful opportunities available for adults to receive an education, a career, and wages ALL at the same time, and an apprenticeship program is that opportunity.



Mid-South Independent Electrical Contractors
2814 Stage Center Drive
Bartlett, TN 38134
(901) 682-3546
www.midsouthiec.org

