

## Turner Takes High School Students on Eye-Opening Jobsite Tour

*As part of its mission to promote careers in construction, CEFGA and its partners host jobsite tours for high school students throughout Georgia. Following is the story of a recent tour hosted by CEFGA partner Turner Construction Company. The story is written by CEFGA staff member John Beavin.*

The thirty-three Adairsville High School construction students weren't sure what to expect as they piled onto the school buses on a chilly October morning. Their instructor, Ron Williams, told them they were going to see a construction site where many craft people were working together to build a new courthouse.

The students got a lot more out of the trip than anyone could have expected.

Carrie Greene, Project Engineer for Turner Construction Company, is the person responsible for the \$23 million construction of the Whitfield County courthouse in Dalton, GA. Greene, along with Project Superintendent Michael Causey and Safety Engineer David "Rusty" Workman, welcomed the students and told them what to expect at the site. All three answered questions about what it is like to enjoy a construction career. Then Greene and her team led the students on a tour of the jobsite they will not soon forget.



Project Engineer Carrie Greene (back to camera, in blue coat) tells Adairsville High School students about all the different craft persons who have worked to build the new Whitfield County courthouse. Students look down as Greene describes all the piping, drainage and electrical connections that had to be in place before the concrete floor was poured. "I never knew it was so complicated," said student Mary Patton. "I've learned so much – everything here is amazing!"

Many students echoed Patton's amazement. William Pullium was interested to learn that fireproof sheetrock was used throughout the building. Pullium, a second-year construction student, was also quite impressed by Greene's description of a waterproof membrane that is used to seal all outside wall joints. "I'm going to go into construction as a career," Pullium said. "There is so much to learn. I want to see that membrane being applied one day."



Instructor Ron Williams, left, points out how to attach sheetrock to metal studs which are being used in the new courthouse. William Pullium, right, enjoyed seeing a construction site because of all he could learn. Pullium said, "I'm definitely going to go into construction. There is new technology being developed for the building industry every day."

Greene intrigued the students with a description of all the changes that had been put into the design of the new courthouse because of the shootings at the Fulton County Courthouse. "We had at least ten meetings with the Whitfield County design team. We have to make provisions for judges to get from their car all the way to the bench without anyone being able to get near them," she detailed for the students. "We even had to go back and install panic alarm buttons under the judges' tables in every courtroom. There is always something interesting in the construction business."



Project Engineer Carrie Greene, fourth from left in blue coat, answers student questions about the extraordinary measures being put into place to protect courthouse staff from attacks such as those which occurred in the Fulton County courthouse earlier in 2005. "In construction, you have to be exceptionally flexible," Greene said. "We made many modifications to the building to accommodate the new safety rules and precautions for a courthouse."

Other students were impressed by how the many trades people had to work together to get the project done. "I've worked at a school for a duct-work contractor," said student Nick Helms. "It is cool to go by that school and know I had a hand in building it. I learned a lot, too - especially how to work safely on a ladder. The people building this courthouse will feel the same way; proud that they did their share. It's a great feeling."



Project Superintendent Michael Causey, right, talks to student Nick Helms about the satisfaction of a career in construction. “I became a journeyman carpenter in four years after high school. I learned a lot,” Causey said. “I became a superintendent at age 25. Now I’m 48. This is exactly what I want to be doing for the rest of my working life.” Causey and Helms talked about the satisfaction of a construction career. “I worked on a school, and it is cool to go by there, see the building, and know I helped build it. That’s a reward most people never know,” Helms said.

Students heard some work ethics things they weren’t expecting, too. Project Safety Engineer Rusty Workman told the students that Turner has an absolute zero tolerance of drugs and alcohol on the job. “If someone gets injured on the job and drugs or alcohol are present in their blood, their insurance is null and void,” Workman explained. Students were also surprised that there is no tobacco allowed on the job. Not even dipping or chewing tobacco. “We had some guy leave a spit cup in a wall cavity once. The customer complained of mold growing on the wall and a foul smell,” Workman recalled. “When we tore out that wall and found that spit cup was the cause of the problem, we decided there would be no more of that on our jobsites.”

Many of the students were impressed that the construction industry has so many opportunities for female employees. Carrie Greene was quite open on the subject. “When I was in college, there were only ten women in my graduating class. Now there are 40 in the class that will graduate in 2005,” she said. “That still makes women a minority on the jobsite, but it is progress. The men on the job treat me with respect, and I do everything I can to earn that respect.” Michael Causey said jokingly, “Yeah, Carrie gets respect because she is the meanest person on the job.” Everyone had a good laugh at that, but no one was absolutely sure that Causey was entirely kidding!



Construction student Mary Patton, right, talks with Project Engineer Carrie Greene about opportunities for women in the construction industry. "I didn't expect the boss on a construction site to be a woman," Patton said. "I'm glad to know that women can find great careers in the industry." Asked what she had learned on the jobsite tour, Patton said, "Everything! I had no idea it was so complicated to plan and run a job. I think it would be great to work my way up to Project Engineer."

Students were polled after the jobsite tour to find out what they thought. Some of the answers are:

- I like all the safety features in place. The construction site is a safe place to work.
- I like the way everyone works together to get the job done.
- Being bi-lingual is a plus for a construction career. A lot of the workers are Spanish speakers.
- I found out that you can expect to travel if you have a career in construction. Even travel overseas if you want and have the skills they need.
- I learned that having a good resume is important.
- I was awed by how many people it takes to build a big building.



Project Superintendent Michael Causey, right, describes for two students the process for putting the roofing onto the new courthouse. Students were interested in how many crafts must work together to complete a major project. Turner Construction has projects underway all over the world. The students were intrigued by thoughts of world travel as part of their career.

A lot of eyes were opened to great careers in construction. The thought of world travel and working for a company like Turner Construction that has "a lot of retirement parties" got the attention of many students. Who knows? Maybe some of the Adairsville High School students will be enjoying profitable construction

careers soon. Whatever happens, these students learned a lot more than anyone expected on this jobsite tour.

*CEFGA – the Construction Education Foundation of Georgia – is a nonprofit organization supported by leading construction companies and trade associations, working to promote careers in the construction industry. For more information contact John Beavin at 678-889-4445 or visit [www.cefga.org](http://www.cefga.org)*