

SkillsUSA Champion Connects with Penco Electrical Stephanie DiLorio / CEFGA Feature Writer

When Adam Sudduth was a senior at White County High School he unexpectedly discovered an interest in electrical power. Adam had been concentrating on welding in his construction classes, but he quickly changed course after a brief segment on residential wiring in an agriculture class. His plans for post-secondary education took on a different focus, and in the fall of 2008 he enrolled in the electrical and construction maintenance program at North Georgia Technical College.

By the next May, Adam had received a diploma with honors from North Georgia Tech, a gold medal for residential wiring at the SkillsUSA State Conference, a full scholarship for the Independent Electrical Contractors apprenticeship program, and a job at Penco Electrical Contractors. What a year!

Adam's decision to participate in CEFGA's 2009 Career Expo and SkillsUSA championship was a smart choice, one he credits with opening doors for his future. At the Career Expo Adam visited Penco's booth in the World of Electrical Contracting and landed his first job after talking with General Superintendent Mitch Williams. Mr. Williams was impressed by Adam's "sincere desire and obvious ambition" and wanted to give him an opportunity to "show what he was really made of" at Penco. Adam invited Mr. Williams to come to the SkillsUSA the next day to watch him compete in the residential wiring event.

When Adam thinks back on the SkillsUSA championship, he vividly remembers a significant moment in the competition. With just a few minutes remaining and the pressure rising, Adam told himself to slow down and concentrate on getting it right. The buzzer went off and as he waited for the judges to announce the winners, he hoped for third place. When he did not hear his name called for the bronze medal, he was disappointed. Seconds later, Adam was flabbergasted when he won gold. First place finish entitled Adam to a full scholarship for the Independent Electrical Contractors' (IEC) apprenticeship program.

When Adam completes IEC's four-year apprenticeship program, he will become a Certified Electrician, qualifying him to work in all fifty states. The program combines classroom learning with lab work and covers residential, commercial, and industrial wiring. Adam's IEC instructor, Jeff Brewer, has been in business for thirty-five years, and believes Adam has the abilities to be a lead man. "He'll be there one day. He's goal oriented and mature. He pays attention, does his work and has a good average", says Mr. Brewer. Adam has indeed set goals for himself, and is working diligently to meet them.

In the next five years, Adam wants to complete his license and become a lead man. In ten years, he wants to be a foreman. Adam chose electrical contracting because it combines "working with your hands and problem solving". He likes the variety and finds working with electrical power "thrilling". Adam would like to specialize in commercial work because of the level of complexity. He enjoyed managing people in previous jobs, and it is something he hopes to do again in the future as a lead man and foreman.

Adam is off to winning start at Penco. “As far as first year apprentices go, I couldn’t ask for someone better than Adam”, says foreman Chris Smith. “Adam picks things up quickly. He’s eager to learn and strives to do well”. Mr. Smith is also impressed by Adam’s reliability and punctuality on his current project at Dalton County High School. Penco has also benefited from participation in CEFGA’s Career Expo. Vice President of Operations, Richard Flanders, says “Employees like Adam just don't come around that often and Penco Electric is very grateful we participated in the World of Electrical Contracting last year. If we hadn't we may have never recruited such a great employee like Adam”.

Adam tells of the past few years with both humility and excitement. His family has been supportive of his career choice and feel proud of his accomplishments. As he talks, his smile reveals optimism about his career prospects, and his friendly and relaxed manner makes it easy to imagine him leading people one day. Adam’s initiative, inquisitiveness, and eagerness to learn have already taken him far. With his problem solving and people skills, he is sure to go further. And to think, his career in electrical contracting started in an agriculture class.

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