

## **CEFGA Summer Intern Becomes Early Bird, Impresses R.M. Anderson**

*By Irene Wazgowska, CEFGA Feature Writer*

Nathan Thacker wasn't known for being an early riser. During the school year his mother would force him out of bed in order for him to make it to Jackson High School on time. But this past summer, to everyone's surprise, Nathan became an early bird.

As a CEFGA summer intern at R.M. Anderson, Nathan had to wake up at 5 a.m. in order to make it to the company's office at 6:30. From there it would be another 60-minute commute to his assigned jobsite. Once on site, he was put to work just as any other employee. "It was a taste of the real world," says Thacker. A much appreciated one at that.

From 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, Nathan kept busy. He worked as a bank man and roller man on a pipe crew, did plenty of weeding to help level lots, as well as level ground stakes and sometimes drive a Packer (a big press made for dirt). Within his eight-week internship, he was sent to four different sites, all of which gave him a better sense of the industry, and what it's like to have to spend money on gas.

Lynne Thacker, Nathan's mother, may not have seen him at work, but witnessed the positive effect the internship had on her son:

"Nathan did a great job getting up in the mornings and getting off to work. He was motivated since he was making money and had responsibility. It also kept him organized with his time," she said. "He had to make sure his lunch was ready for the next day and that he had his work clothes, boots, and gloves ready to go. He was very responsible. He took his job seriously. I was very proud of him.

"Also, Nathan got a true taste of earning some money and learning how fast it can be spent. This is a good lesson for any teenager. It makes them appreciate more the cost of gas and other things. Especially since gas was \$4 a gallon while he was driving to work this [past] summer."

Not only did this 16-year-old learn a strong sense of responsibility, he also learned how to interact with working professionals.

At first Nathan was "intimated" by his older coworkers, but "once he got to know the guys," any fear he'd once had dissipated.

For Gina Shelnett, Secretary/Treasurer and part owner of R.M. Anderson, Nathan's age was a non-issue. He was "a diligent worker.. dependable and very interested in learning a trade to better himself." His supervisors, Jonathan Pitts and Ray Nolley agree that Nathan was "focused and very earnest in his duties." As a result, the crew at R.M. Anderson says "he's definitely a candidate for hire."

What are Nathan's plans? He's not quite sure.

Nathan likes the idea of participating in a summer internship again. When it comes to plans after graduating, he's also keeping his options open. Sonny Braswell is confident that his student will "go far in whatever avenue he chooses."

For now, Nathan will continue to participate in the things he enjoys, which include playing drums, soccer, cross country and track. And just as he did the summer before (in fact it was the only break he took during his internship), Nathan plans on participating in World Changers, where he will join other teenagers to repair homes for those that would otherwise not be able to afford the costs.

As part of his near future plans, Nathan will continue taking classes with Sonny Braswell, his construction teacher at Jackson High School. As an A-average student, he's earned the opportunity to be an assistant to his teacher, as well as to participate in a lengthier class in which he has more time to learn.

And it's likely Nathan will be encouraging his peers to participate in an internship themselves. He thinks CEFGA is great, "because it allows kids to go and find out what they want to do in life." It "allows for success." He admits that "the first couple of weeks were rough," but that you shouldn't be intimidated. "If you want to do it, do it. Don't give any thought or hesitation."

While Nathan knows from experience, he takes heed from his mother and those that have been working for longer than he's been living: "If you find a job you love, you won't ever have to work a day in your life."

*CEFGA is a nonprofit, 501c3 organization supported by leading construction companies and trade associations in Georgia. We bring the construction industry to students and students to the construction industry. [www.cefga.org](http://www.cefga.org)*