

High School Grad Finds Professional Career through Internship Program

By Irene Wazgowska, CEFGA Feature Writer

Patrick Blow Jr. has made his father proud. So much so that Patrick Sr. can hardly describe his elation. What has this 18-year-old, Avondale High School graduate done?

He's begun a professional career.

Patrick wasn't certain what he wanted to do once he graduated. He knew though that he didn't want to go straight to college and wanted to start earning an income. He recalled how a friend of his from the grade above had participated in the Youth Employment & Training Program through the Dekalb Workforce Development Center. His friend's involvement had piqued his own interest, and the following year Patrick signed-on.



While attending the program at DWD, Patrick met Gordy Morris, Training Supervisor at Georgia Power's Klondike Training Center. Gordy was there recruiting future linemen, interns for GA Power's training program.

Initially, Patrick was uncertain about the industry. He worried about safety, the heights that linemen work from, but Gordy "eased his concern." He told the prospective interns that: "you've got to pay attention to what you're doing," and that if "you follow the rules, you go home safe everyday."

There were a series of tests Patrick had to take in order to be considered for the internship. Amongst them were the CAST, PAT and a drug test. Patrick passed each with flying colors. And so he was chosen by Gordy, along with 12 others, to begin the internship process.

Gordy recalls that one of the reasons he chose Patrick was that "he kept a good attitude." Patrick "seemed to be very interested," and demonstrated the initiative and ability to work as a team player.

Of the 13 original interns, only nine were sent to North Georgia Technical College for an eight-week Electrical Lineworker's Apprentice Certificate program. Of those nine, only seven were hired as full-time employees of Georgia Power. Patrick was chosen to join the team.

Recently, Patrick joined the other interns at Georgia Power's Klondike Training Center for a four-week Basic Line Equipment Skills course. There, he got first-hand experience climbing the heights he'd once been weary about.

"When I first started training, I was a little scared of heights. But after my training with Georgia Power and after going up a few times and I wasn't scared at all. After a while it's nothing."

No longer phased by heights, Patrick knows that there is a lot more for him to learn. During the summer he got a good feel about what it would be like working in the field, seeing different things and working in various conditions. But it was only the beginning. There are at least four years of training before he will become a Journeyman Lineman. In addition, he wants to go to school for Business Administration and one day work in upper management. He says that a job at the Klondike Training Center would be "nice."

These days Patrick is headquartered in Tucker, working as a UAL-1 (unsigned apprentice lineman). He operates the line truck, sets poles, and makes materials which he hands-up to the linemen. Chuck Hawkins, his supervisor, says that Patrick is a "fine upstanding young man." He compliments Patrick's strength in learning and says: "he's going to have a real good career if he keeps on the road he's going."

For those interested in the industry Patrick suggests you get a CDL (Commercial Driver's License) license. "You won't be able to operate a truck without one." He

encourages people to "stick with it." The process may be long, but "it pans out... You can get a 30 year career job."

Work aside, Patrick knows his income allows him to have fun as well. He likes to hang out with friends, work on cars and relax. He's saving up to move out on his own, and may even treat himself to a TV this Christmas.

This upstanding young man has proven that with persistence, dedication and a good deal of motivation, you can pave your way to success.

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