

Hyatt a 'rising, shining star' at Dixie Electric

It isn't even 7:00 a.m. and apprentice electrician Casey Hyatt is already working at the – where else? – Buckhead Hyatt Hotel. "I tell everybody they named this place after me," he says with a quick smile.

Today he's working in Atlanta. Tomorrow it might be Rome or Athens, or one of the many malls in the state. Or wherever. "If you do a good job, you become a job hopper. They say, 'Hey, I need Casey over here,' and I go where they want me. The work never gets old. It's always a new site, a new challenge. The best thing, though, is that at quitting time, the work will just sit right there and wait on you to come back the next day. You never have to take it home with you."

Casey and a team of electricians from Dixie Electric are finishing up a remodeling project in the upscale Hyatt Hotel dining room. "We've rewired the whole room, put in new recessed lights and a dimmer panel. Now they can create different types of moods by changing the light levels," Casey pointed out as he prepared to install some light fixtures.



Apprentice electrician Casey Hyatt reviews an electrical drawing to see where a recessed light should be installed. Hyatt is working for Dixie Electric on a dining room remodeling project at the Buckhead Hyatt Hotel. Hyatt (the electrician) says that he gets a lot of satisfaction from doing what he likes to do and what he can do well. It also pays him enough for him to be doing quite nicely, financially, at age 20 and only two years out of high school.

Asked how he came to be an electrician, Casey explained that he took construction courses all the way through school at Sequoyah High, where he was the Construction Student of the Year his senior year. "I've always liked to build things – tree houses, a dog house, a gun cabinet. Construction class gave me a chance to do hands-on work and learn at the same time. I learned how to measure stuff right the first time, read blueprints, use all kinds of tools, and how to work. That's the most important – knowing how to work; knowing how it all fits together."

Casey's high school construction teacher, Bill Bulmer, remembers Casey clearly. "If Casey was given an assignment, you can bet he'd get it done. He did everything thoroughly and to the best of his ability," Bulmer recalled.

Gene Cain, General Foreman for the Buckhead Hyatt project, likes Casey's work ethic. "He has a good attitude, he's punctual, and he's mechanically inclined. But what makes Casey an above average apprentice is not only how much construction knowledge he brought to the workplace, but also his willingness to keep learning. He enjoys applying on the job what he learns in the apprentice school. His skills are growing all the time," Cain said.

Jeff Lake, CEO of Dixie Electric, called Casey one of their “rising, shining stars.” “Casey fills the bill as the kind of employee we groom for future field leadership positions. He does quality work and works well with others. He is one of those rare finds that are the ‘luck of the draw.’ He’s a person we hope to keep for the long term,” Lake said enthusiastically.

OK. Construction. But why become an electrician? “One day a man named Chuck Little, the Human Resources Director of the Atlanta Electrical Contractors Association, came to Sequoyah and told us what kind of life a licensed electrician can have. That opened my eyes big time,” Casey recalled. “I went to work for Dixie Electric right out of high school and entered the apprenticeship program. Now, after only two years, life is really good.”

“Really good” is defined by Casey as having a “really nice truck,” having time to hunt and fish (this year he’s gotten an eight-point buck, a five-point buck, four does and a wild hog), and having time to travel to places like Key West for a 10-day fishing trip. Riding around in the north Georgia mountains on his brand new four-wheeler isn’t too bad, either. “Yeah, things are going great. I get full benefits for free. That’s worth a lot of money right there. I plan to start building a new home for myself in about two years, maybe in Pickens or Dawson County. I’ll be able to do that when I’m closer to finishing school and getting my journeyman’s license. Then I’ll be making some serious money,” Casey said, with lots of emphasis on the word “serious.” How serious? “If you count the benefits, which definitely do count, you’re talking up to the \$75,000 level – if you’re good,” he said pointedly. When he becomes a field leader, it could be more than that.

Casey is enrolled in the five-year Atlanta Electrical Joint Apprenticeship Training Center (AEJATC) program. He doesn’t have to pay anything for the education and he can get college credits for the courses. He goes to school on Friday, every other week.

Whether he’s working at the Buckhead Hyatt or relaxing under the mounted buck’s head on the wall at home, Casey Hyatt is truly on his way to making a grand life for himself.