

## **Sprinkler Fitting a Good Fit for 18-Year-Old Kelly**

Elizabeth Kelly proudly explains she's a third-generation sprinkler fitter.

"My grandpa was a sprinkler fitter in Chicago. My dad is a sprinkler fitter. So that makes me a third generation sprinkler fitter," she says.

So it's not a big surprise she decided to follow in her family's footsteps. What may be a surprise is her certainty. With a rare focus, she explains her passion for the trade.

"I always knew this is what I wanted to do," Elizabeth says. "I knew when I finished high school this is what I wanted to do."

So after she graduated from Berkmar High School in Gwinnett County in May 2004, 18-year-old Elizabeth found the CEFGA/GFSA Sprinkler Fitting Apprenticeship Program on the internet. She enrolled and today is a Level 1 Sprinkler Fitting apprentice.

"The classes are great. Our instructor explains everything. He's patient. I feel like I am learning so much about the sprinkler industry," says Elizabeth. "And whatever I don't get in class, I can always go home and ask my dad."

Her dad is Jerry Kelly, who works with Property Engineering Services of Marietta. Elizabeth says she has learned a lot about the sprinkler industry just by being around her dad.

"I always begged my dad to let me work with him on the weekends. Over the summer, I changed out pipe, installed heads," she said. "Everyday I get to spend on the job is a learning experience."

Women make-up fewer than 5-percent of the construction trades. That doesn't seem to matter to Elizabeth. "I kind of like walking out onto a construction site and being the only girl. Sometimes they (the other sprinkler fitters) laugh at me, because I don't know how to do everything. But, I'm learning, and they usually offer to help."

*CEFGA – the Construction Education Foundation of Georgia – is working to address and help reduce a growing shortage of skilled workers in construction. CEFGA sponsors many training initiatives, including the Sprinkler Fitting Apprenticeship Program in Lawrenceville, GA. More information [www.cefqa.org](http://www.cefqa.org)*