



## **National Career and Technical Education Month Highlights the Value of UA 400 Youth Apprenticeship Program**

**Kaukauna, Wisconsin (February 24, 2021)** – February is National Career and Technical Education (CTE) Month and there isn't a better time to consider a career in the pipe trades. One vital source of future trades workers are the high schools who participate in career and technical education (CTE) programs in the skilled trades.

Amidst a global pandemic, American teenagers remain steadfast in their belief that higher education plays a key role in their future success. However, the paths they are planning to take after high school differ from previous generations. In fact, more than half are open to something other than a four-year degree, and 70 percent want to follow their own educational path.

A key reason that high school students are choosing apprenticeships is no tuition and getting paid to learn. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, the average technical college degree costs \$33,000 compared to \$127,000 for a bachelor's degree.

Since the enrollment in high school trades courses nationally does not align with the need for skilled trades workers in the coming decade, UA 400 saw an opportunity to recruit high school students to fill the talent pipeline. In a world where quality, good-paying jobs with ample room for professional and personal growth can be hard to come by, the UA 400 Youth Apprenticeship Program could be a high school student's first step towards a great career.

In 2016, UA 400 launched its Youth Apprenticeship Program for high school juniors and seniors. DJ Kloida, UA 400 youth apprenticeship coordinator, regularly visits local schools to meet with students and talk about the benefits of an apprenticeship. The program has been so successful that UA 400 introduced their mobile training unit in 2018, which allows Kloida to bring equipment and informational materials to schools and career fairs.

"UA 400 and our contractor partners at the Mechanical Contractors Association (MCA), see the importance of promoting the piping industry to our future generations of workers," said Trevor Martin UA



400 business manager. “By collaborating, we get the opportunity to meet with the students and instructors and share with them all the opportunities of what a career in the pipe trades can afford them. Also, establishing strong relationships with our area schools lets us continue to provide qualified UA 400 Youth Apprenticeship candidates to our MCA partners.”

Kyle and Tanner, two high school seniors attending Bay Port High School in Green Bay, enrolled in the UA 400 Youth Apprentice Program last summer. Currently, both boys are youth apprentices working at Tweet/Garot Mechanical, a UA 400 signatory contractor.

Since Tanner's dad and stepdad are UA 400 plumbers, it made his decision to join the Youth Apprentice Program easy. After graduation, Tanner will pursue a plumbing apprenticeship. “I have had some really good foremen teaching me and have learned a lot of valuable skills from them,” said Tanner. “The youth apprentice program has helped me figure out the career I want to do for the rest of my life and get a head start on it while I am in school.”

Kyle always had an interest in welding and plans to pursue a pipefitting apprenticeship after graduation. “My experience with the youth apprenticeship program has been amazing so far,” said Kyle. “It has greatly helped me figure out what I want to do after high school. I like being able to work and having it count as high school credits.”

After high school graduation, most UA 400 youth apprentices decide to pursue a five-year apprenticeship, which offers students the chance to “earn and learn” by combining the best of on-the-job training, classroom instruction and ongoing assessments against skill standards without racking up student loans that will take years to pay off.

Most skills that apprentices will see in the real world, UA 400 is able to create and reinforce that in their 61,000 square foot training center. Once apprentices complete their apprenticeships and achieve journeyman status, members have a variety of career options to choose from in the pipe trades including foreman, project supervisor, estimator, instructor or they can start their own independent business in plumbing, HVAC and pipe fabrication.

“Developing a partnership with the UA 400 Pipe Trades and their Youth Apprentice Program has opened the doors for our students to receive work-based education from the very best contractors and educators at the very best facilities to teach these trades,” said Adam Cochart, Bay Port High School tech ed teacher.



“Our students enjoy the opportunity to work on meaningful and relevant work that will lead to a fulfilling and prosperous career.”

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) notes that job prospects should be good for welders trained in the latest technologies. Pipefitters and plumbers are in demand as well with BLS predicting a job outlook growth of 14 percent between 2018-2028. HVAC/R is a fast-growing field, with the BLS predicting a much faster average career growth of 13 percent through 2028, much faster than the national average for all occupations at 5 percent. This growth in the HVAC/R field comes at the same time that smart and green technologies are changing the industry and offering new opportunities for HVAC/R technicians.

The future of pipe trades continues to evolve and grow with automation and technology trends providing career opportunities for those interested in the pipe trades. UA 400 Pipe Trades encourages any student who is mechanically inclined and eager to learn about pipefitting, fabrication, plumbing or HVAC to apply for their Youth Apprenticeship Program. For more information, contact [djkloida@ua400.org](mailto:djkloida@ua400.org).

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#### About UA 400 Pipe Trades

The UA 400 Pipe Trades, headquartered in Kaukauna, Wisconsin with an office in Fond du Lac, is comprised of approximately 2300 members serving eighteen counties in Northeast Wisconsin. The organization is affiliated with the United Association of Plumber and Pipefitters with an estimated 345,000 membership throughout the United States and Canada. The group's mission is to be the preferred choice for industries, employers and workers specializing in plumbing, pipefitting, HVACR service and pipe fabrication as well as training for its members and qualified manpower to their 105 signatory contractors. The UA 400 takes pride in their partnerships and contributions to serve local communities with organizations such as Cerebral Palsy Telethon, Special Olympics, Rebuilding Together, Heat's On Project, Harbor House and Salvation Army. To keep up with the latest news and to learn more about UA 400, visit <http://www.ua400.org> follow us on Facebook and YouTube.

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