

ESPA Success Stories - "Where are they now?"

"From High School Grad to Lead Technician"

This is the first in a series of articles highlighting folks who have earned the ESPA Certified EST credential and entered the workforce as a technician. We are checking back in with them a few years later to see how they are progressing in their career path.

In 2010, Walker Career Center in Indianapolis reached out to us to see if we thought the ESPA program would be a good fit at the high school level. Walker has a variety of CTE programs, from dental assisting to automotive repair, and everything in between. They also had an electronics program that was once very popular, but losing traction. They were combining the electronics curriculum with computer technology and wanted to provide training that would result in real world jobs for high schoolers who were not planning to go on to college. So we gave it a try; the first time ESPA had been adopted at the high school level. We were excited about kids getting a combination of EST skills and computer technology in the same class!

Jacob Wheatley was in that class. He had known for some time that he wanted to work in the world of technology, and was also comfortable with computers. So he was in the right place at the right time. His class studied the ESPA body of knowledge, and got hands-on experience by wiring and trimming out a house that was built by the school's building trades program. So by the time he graduated (with the ESPA certification) he had literally already done a lot of the tasks he would be asked to do on the job. He was hired immediately by Advanced Electronics, a local company that works on both residential and commercial projects. His thirst for knowledge led him to night classes at Ivy Tech Community College, where he earned CompTIA A+ and Net+ certifications, giving him the skills he needed to advance rapidly and take on more responsibilities. Within a few years he was considered a lead technician and had received several wage increases. He had purchase a home and a car, and often got to talk with former classmates who were just getting out of college, burdened with debt, and looking for their first job. Today, he is not just a lead technician but spending much more time in the office, doing design and engineering work as well as programming the control systems for large sports bars and restaurants. Company owner Joe Monfort tells us "he is one of our most valuable team members, and learning new skills every day. We even hired his younger brother!" We asked Jacob how he liked the way his career has worked out. "I really enjoy what I am doing...I get to work with new technologies all the time, and get overtime hours pretty much every week. I love to learn new skills and my goal is to transition into doing design and programming full-time. I feel like I am in a very good spot at age 25, and have a great career ahead of me".

Walker Career Center continues to offer the ESPA training and certification, along with CompTIA credentials, and their program recently won an Award of Excellence from the Indiana Department of Education.

Wouldn't it be nice if there were a high school career center in every town preparing young people to come into our industry with the right skills to get right to work in the field?



Wheatley and ESPA's Jeff Gardner