

Featured Apprentice

Name: Melissa McCullar (Electrical Apprentice - Level 4)

Hometown: Originally from Marion, AR, moved to Alma, AR in 2014

Married: Yes, to Heath McCullar

Kids: Adam Brown, 24; Claire McCullar, 16; Seth McCullar, 12

Employer: McCullar Electric

Trade: Electrical

Job Training Certifications: Residential Electrician as of 12/2017

Previous Employment: Of course, my previous employment did not include the electrical field. The closest thing I had to the electrical field was being married to an electrician. I have always been in the accounting field (i.e. banks, warehouse office manager, and St. Jude supervisor to a Memphis hospital's accounting team).

Short/Long Term Goals: My short term goal in the beginning was to give Heath the extra hand he needed on the job sites. In order for me to be on the job sites, I needed to enroll in school for the apprenticeship program. This was a decision that Heath and I juggled in the beginning. Heath did not want me to pursue this in the beginning. His statement on this was "this wasn't my dream". Needless to say, I enrolled.

Long term: Our goals changed once I enrolled and began working along side him on the job sites. In the beginning, it took time for the contractors to absorb the idea of a woman on the job. Once they had a chance to work with me, they accepted me as one of the guys. I still have one contractor that only calls me to schedule work. I would like to get my master license. Heath and I are not spring chickens anymore. So we are looking into the future and hoping our kids want to get into the field and make it a true family business. Our oldest, Adam, will be attending ACEF as well and will start this fall. I am very excited for his decision!!

How is your experience at ACEF? Once we made the decision to move forward, I made the call to ACEF. I spoke with Laura Wood and she guided me every step of the way. Laura also gave me the name and number of another husband/wife team in Jonesboro area. I felt that ACEF didn't have a lot of women enrolled in their program and we stuck out like a sore thumb. Of course, I was a little nervous on my first night of school. I was the first one in class that night and two other apprentices (James Bates and Ryan Harrison) sat down at my table.

From the beginning, they treated me no different from the other guys in the class. Jonathan Thompson was my first year instructor and I always wondered what was going through his mind when ACEF told him a woman was attending his class. The last night of my first year, I remember Jonathan telling me that he enjoyed having me in his class. I had the honor to have Charlie Loum for my second year instructor. I loved to hear about Charlie's stories from his work experiences. I enjoyed Jeremy Eaves for my third year. He would always have an experience to share. I'm currently in my fourth year of apprenticeship school and Brian Buzbee is my instructor. I can relate to Brian and he gets you ready to take the BIG test. As we near the end of our fourth year, I'm glad I was able to experience this ride with the guys from the first year to the fourth: James Bates, Ryan Harrison, Cody Blauvelt, and Jesse Whorton. There is not a bad contact at ACEF. Contact Maggie, Kathy, Laura or Nathan to help you get started on your journey in the electrical field.

Word of Wisdom: If someone is interested in the electrical program, I encourage them to find an employer and stick with it. I'm sure if you hear you have FOUR years to complete the program, you probably would think that is a long time. The four years actually went by fast. As you are working in the field, the one night a week was apart of my routine and an opportunity to ask other apprentices and/or my instructor questions that I had experience the previous week. The four years is a small token to pay for the experience and knowledge. Experience and knowledge you will have for life that can't be taken away from you. Electricians are always needed. Living with an electrician for 18 years, he has never been without a job.