

Career Tech Matters

by Dennis Franks • Feb. 10, 2017

From his dad, Michael Shepherd gained hands-on experience working on trucks. And from his grandma, he was encouraged to apply for the Diesel & Heavy Truck Mechanics instructor position at Pickaway-Ross.



Michael, who graduated from Westfall High School, grew up “tinkering around with Dad in the garage” in their Orient home.

His first job after graduating high school in 2008 was to work for a wholesale dealer, where he bought non-running trucks and got them to work.



Michael worked in the diesel truck industry until 2015 when he joined the Licking Heights Local School District as a bus mechanic.

While some of the work was similar to his previous jobs – repairing and replacing defective parts and completing routine maintenance, for example – Michael said he missed troubleshooting and diagnosing problems.

After seeing the posting for the teaching position, Michael mentioned it to his grandmother, a retired teacher.

“She said I should apply and I said, ‘You really think I’m teacher material?’ ”

“She said, ‘You know how to do all this stuff and you have your certifications.’ ”

Gary Robinson, Career & Technical Education supervisor, said he’s glad Michael listened to his grandmother.

“I’ll tell you what I liked about him right off the bat when he came in to interview,” said Gary. “He had dirty fingers. I knew this was a guy who was

hands-on.

“Then, I took him to the lab. All of the other candidates looked around and said it was a nice space. Michael walked over to the diesel truck we have and climbed up on it and started telling me about that model. And then he just opens up the hood and climbs in there and starts checking out the engine.

“I knew we had the right guy.”

While he’s only halfway through the school year, Michael is enjoying his new career.

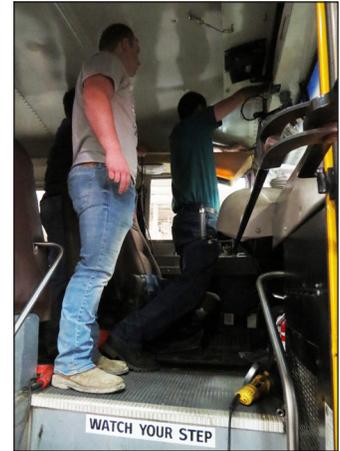
“I like seeing the kids have that ‘Oh, I got it’ moment when they understand something,” he said.

And with Michael’s background in the industry, he said he’s focusing on teaching them “the stuff they’re going to use every day.”

“It’s important to know how to diagnose the problem and fix what’s wrong, instead of throwing different parts at it and hoping that fixes it.”

Michael’s background has benefited Pickaway-Ross in another way: He’s secured donations of engines and transmissions for use by his students.

I couldn’t agree more with Gary’s assessment: Michael is the right guy to take this program to the next level for our students.



Michael Shepherd works with students on the school’s new bus in the Diesel & Heavy Truck Mechanics lab.

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