

Career Tech Matters

by Dennis Franks • Feb. 24, 2016

Three new employees are having a big impact on the youngest students at Pickaway-Ross Career & Technology Center.



Ali Free, Kayla Love and Deanna Redfearn all started this year as preschool aides, working with 4- and 5-year-olds who attend either a morning or afternoon program.

Each woman brought a similar work experience with her: Ali has a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education and worked as a home health-care aide; Kayla and Deanna have associate's degrees and worked at a child care center and Paint Valley High School, respectively.

Each also had a connection to Pickaway-Ross and were happy to apply when the positions opened.

"My daughter went to preschool here and I knew Betty (Pettit). She told me she was retiring," said Deanna, who had worked at Pickaway-Ross from 2007-2010 and knew it was a good place to work.

In addition to working with the preschoolers, the trio also helps the juniors and seniors who are in the Early Childhood Education program.

"We're guiding the high school students and being role models by helping them learn to be independent and be a professional in the field," Kayla said.

Similarly, they also help the preschoolers become independent and get ready for kindergarten, helping them learn the social skills that they will need. For example, a recent interaction showed a child's unique perspective on problem-solving.

"We had a 5-year-old who was trying to get a necklace off her head and it was stuck," recalled Ali. "She said, 'I guess I'm just going to have to



Pre-school aides Ali Free, from left, Deanna Redfearn and Kayla Love all started at Pickaway-Ross this year.

shave my head.' "

Working with the preschoolers is, of course, a big part of the job. And the part that they all love.

"There are days where you have the best day ever but you leave exhausted," Ali said.

"I've learned that you need to be in shape," Kayla said.

"You have to sprint," Ali added.

The investment is always worth it, the women agreed.

Deanna recalled a day that she came in to work for a few hours one afternoon. Two boys were playing Jenga and invited her to play with them.

"I had things I needed to do but I said yes because I didn't want to disappoint them. And I had the best time. They were really sweet about making sure that I got my turn," Deanna said.

"Every day," said Kayla, "no matter what, somebody makes your day better."

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