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Highly Skilled Employees Essential to Success

By Roberta Pianalto

Ag Power Equipment Company is a Case International Harvest (IH) Dealer which prides itself with the industry’s newest most advanced farm equipment along with hiring highly skilled employees. This company strives to share Case IH Manufacturer’s commitment to its customers with a high level of product knowledge, skilled service technicians, and high quality parts.

Ag Power Equipment has partnered with SER Corporation several times within the last five years to continue its commitment to find and fill positions with high quality employees. Ag Power hired two highly skilled SER clients last summer as service technicians for their Goodland location. They also participated in the SER “On the Job Training” Program which reimbursed 50% training wages for the two SER clients. SER Corporation has been a valuable asset and Ag Power wants to continue its relationship with SER for years to come.

Ag Power especially looks forward to acquiring more employees for all of their locations including Goodland and Sharon Springs, Kansas as well as Holyoke and Burlington in Colorado. Ag Power will definitely continue to partner with SER Corporation and assist with recruitment efforts to help train and fill job openings. Ag Power feels these highly skilled employees are essential for the success of their business.



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“I Can Do Anything I Want” Attitude

By Mike Medina



Alfredo Benitez is the son of immigrant workers from Guanajuato, Mexico. His parents came to the United States of America over twenty-five years ago. Alfredo worked in ranching most of his high school years and continued to work in agriculture after high school graduation.

He soon tired of part-time on call ranch work and decided to enroll into Garden City Community College (GCCC) Welding Technology Program. The welding program at GCCC prepares students for all types of careers in welding. Focus of the program is on applying technical knowledge and skills to join or cut metal surfaces.

Born with a disability, only a thumb and stubs for fingers on his left hand, he was forced to adapt to everyday life challenges. When I asked him how his disability limited his career choice he answered by asking me, “What disability? I was born this way and I never thought of it as a disability. Sure there were some things that were more difficult for me to do but I can do anything I want.” Alfredo was definitely up to any challenge.

While enrolled at GCCC he was employed by TOK Oil Field Services of Garden City as a low level welder. TOK provides in-house and on-site welding, construction, and site management services for oil fields in Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas. They are fully licensed and certified. Their high level of expertise ensures quality work every time. They also build a variety of tanks on location, including oil tanks, water tanks, and fuel tanks in a variety of sizes ranging from 100 to 1 100 gallons.

In December 2014, Alfredo was awarded an advance certificate in welding. Alfredo is now a supervisor with TOK and is currently making \$15 an hour. He is a full-time employee working 40 plus hours a week and receives full health and dental benefits. “He is..., according to Stacy Parks, receptionist at TOK, ...one of our best welders and an efficient night/day supervisor.”

When asked about how SER Corporation helped him, Alfredo quickly responded and said, “The help with tuition let me focus more on college welding courses and I didn’t have to work as much....I am very grateful for the help”. Alfredo is a very outgoing person. He doesn’t let his physical disability get in his way. He is determined to meet every challenge with an “I can do anything I want” attitude.

Pedro Rolando Astoquilca Maldonado

By Oscar Interino

In 1946, in the small rural village of Huatagua; Department of Moquegua, Peru was born a baby boy named Pedro Rolando Astoquilca Maldonado. Pedro was the second eldest of nine siblings and by the time he was eight years old, he had already migrated to the capital of Peru; Lima where he finished his secondary school studies while working full time to support himself until the age of eighteen. At the age of nineteen he enters the Peruvian Military.

After two years in the Military, Pedro meets Hermenegilda Lourdes Sosa Gonzalez who would eventually become his wife and mother of his three children. Pedro and Hermenegilda decide to raise their children in the city Arequipa, Peru. There he worked as a taxi cab driver and Hermenegilda as a school teacher. They lived pretty much a normal life style up until Hermenegilda began to have symptoms of Aneurysm. She had these symptoms for approximately two years before her unexpected death at the age of forty-six.

After Hermenegilda's death, Pedro begins to live a life of loneliness and of many changes. One of those many changes comes in 2008 when his sister Natalia who was already living in the U.S. petitions him to come to the U.S. in hopes of a better future. This is something Pedro will always be grateful for to his sister Natalia because after being able to adapt to the lifestyle of the Mid-West, Pedro began studying English.

After studying English here and there, Pedro begins to inquire about U.S. citizenship, it's at that point when he learns about SER Corporation. He thought if he were to become a U.S. citizen, he would be able to help his children that still lived in Peru. That was motivation enough for Pedro to sign up for the ten week Citizenship class offered at SER Corporation. During his attendance of the citizenship class at SER corp. Pedro noticed his knowledge of U.S. History and Government improve tremendously not to mention his ability to read, write and speak the English language.

After completing the U.S. citizenship class at SER Corp. Pedro sends his N-400 application to the USCIS (U.S. Dept. of Citizenship and Immigration Services). And within two months of processing, Pedro receives his interview notice in the mail, the day he had so long awaited for. Pedro aced his citizenship interview thanks to the arduous preparation he had endured in the months prior. His humbleness and mindfulness has allowed him to complete this challenge very seldom seen for people his age (70). He wants to send the message to all those who think that the U.S. citizenship is dream out of their reach to abstain from that thought process and to take it upon themselves the discipline needed to accomplish this dream.



Smart Career Decision

By Richard Vargas

Russell Bowles, a participant in the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP), was attending school at Cowley Community College (CCC), when I met him. He had worked for the past two years with cattle and baling hay. Prior to that he served in the Army for a number of years and was ready to obtain a career in welding as he enjoyed this type of work.

Russell wasn't working at the time he enrolled and was worried about how he was going to pay for all the training cost. He was receiving some help from a veterans program but needed extra assistance to cover additional expenses. With the help from the NFJP, Russell was able to continue his education at CCC without financial worries. In May 2014, Russell graduated with a Welding Technology Degree and was ready to job search.

Russell visited a friend in Wamego, Kansas and found a company in need of welders. R-Tech Tool and Machine is a family-owned business which has been in the industry for over 20 years. They had just acquired a bigger building and were recruiting welders. When Russell was going through the interview process he told them about the NFJP On the Job Training (OJT). He explained that the NFJP would pay up to 50% of the participant's wages while he is in training. R-Tech was very interested in the OJT contract and they sent their human resource manager to the SER Wichita office to sign a contract.

Once Russell was hired, R-Tech helped with moving expenses and provided a place for him to stay until he was able to find a home in Wamego. Russell feels his decision to work towards a welding degree was a smart career choice. He is happy with the outcome and is very grateful that SER Corporation was able to help him throughout the process.



Reaching a Cool Goal”

By Vicki Needham



Vincente Ramirez Jr. had a goal of becoming a Heating and Air Conditioning Technician. He grew up in a small town of approximately 625 people in south central Kansas. Jobs in this rural community are not in abundance and fortunately for Vincete he found work on a farm to help him cover training cost.

Vincente contacted me Vicki Needham the Hays Client Service Agent (CSA) for SER Corporation, in August of 2013. I completed an intake on Vincente. From the information and verification he provided, I determined that he qualified for SER Corporation’s National Farmworker Jobs Program. After looking at the skills and qualifications Vincente needed to gain employment in heating and air, it was decided Vincente complete the Plumbing, Heating and Air Conditioning (PHAC) Program at North Central Kansas Technical College in Hays. After reviewing Vincente’s financial aid, I determined Vincente still had training cost to cover so I wrote a classroom training contract to further assist him.

While Vincente was in training I visited him periodically. I enjoyed our visits as it was evident he liked the training. He always had a smile on his face and was excited about sharing what he had learned.

His attendance was excellent and his grades demonstrated the time and effort he put into training. After Vincente finished the classroom training he told me that he would like to look for work in Hays. He did not want to return to the town he grew up in. I supplied Vincente with some On-The-Job Training (OJT) letters for him to attach to his application and Vincente kept in touch with me about where he was applying for work.

Danielle Lang of Glassman Corporation, contacted me and stated that they were interested in hiring Vincente using the OJT Program. With the help of the OJT, Vincente was able to secure a position with Glassman Corporation in Hays as a HVAC Technician. Vincente achieved his goal of obtaining employment as a Heating and Air Conditioning Technician.

Vincente increased his income and is earning over \$18,000 more a year than he earned doing farm work. He has gone from a job that did not have any benefits, to a career with benefits. All of Vincente’s hard work paid off. He has the job he was wanting. As a (CSA), it is so rewarding to see a participant reach his goal. I am very happy for the minor role SER Corporation played in helping Vincente achieve his goal. He was great to work with as he always had something positive to share with me about his training and finally about his career. Congratulations Vincente!



SER CORPORATION

1020 N Main
Wichita, KS 67203

Phone: (316)264-5372

Fax: (316)264-0194

E-mail: receptionist@sercorp.com

SER BOARD MEMBERS

Bill Ellison, John Salem, Sergio Gonzalez,
Francisco Gonzalez, Paul Feleciano,
Victor Balderas, Norman Bent

Edited By:

Richard E. Lopez, CEO/President

And

Carolyn Benitez EO/NFJP

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