

Students:
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From Trouble to Triumph

Turning "failure" into "finding your way" is no easy task, especially for a young adult navigating through the turbulent teenage years. But finding your way is not impossible. This is one young man's story of changing course from trouble to triumph.

King Blair, Jr., a senior at Southeast High School (SEHS), is quick to share that motivation, academics, and a good attendance record were not exactly his strengths as a student. "I was making bad choices," he shared. In fact, there was only one class that held his interest, and that was his culinary class with teacher Chef Mike Niewodowski. King thrived in the school's commercially equipped kitchen, learning to prepare large quantities of delicious food for teachers and guests.

Then came the turning point. "When I learned I could become a part of the On-the-Job-Training (OJT), I buckled down and did what I had to do," King said.

Once King met the qualifications to participate during his junior year, OJT teacher Laura Lynch said there was no turning back. "King chose the dietary department at Manatee Memorial Hospital (MMH) for his job site. He started out making deserts and quickly impressed his bosses with his skills, speed, and strong work ethic," Laura said. "It wasn't long before his responsibilities included preparing the meals for patients, staff, and catering assignments."

School ended in June and so did OJT, but that didn't stop King from going to work. In fact, King volunteered full time in the MMH cafeteria all summer long. He even celebrated his birthday at work!

"My birthday was really special for me this summer," King said. "I got the most awesome birthday present! I was offered a full-time job with salary and benefits! It's a lot of responsibility and a little stressful, but I'll deal with it."

Today King is enrolled in the Diploma Option II Program, where he continues to work full time and is earning a paycheck while simultaneously earning high school credits. "It's important to find something you love to do and go for it," King shared. "School's not the greatest but when you find what you like, it's worth it. The only way you're going to get somewhere is with a high school diploma."

King is on track to graduate in June. His goals include being at work every day, attending Manatee Technical Institute's Culinary Arts program, opening his own restaurant, and giving a hand up to someone else. Congratulations to this hardworking young man!



King Blair, Jr. displays a healthy sandwich option for the lunch crowd at Manatee Memorial Hospital.



Mr. Tim Schoonmaker, King's boss and Director of Food Services for Sodexo at Manatee Memorial Hospital, was recently awarded the Florida Division on Career Development & Transition's (FLDCDT) "Making a Difference Award."

JOBS



Institutional and Cafeteria Cooks
Salary: \$18,600 – \$27,300
Workplace: hospitals, schools
Hours: varies



Food Service Managers
Salary: \$33,500 – \$65,500
Workplace: restaurants, institutions
Hours: varies



Food Preparation Workers
Salary: \$17,300 – \$21,300
Workplace: restaurants, institutions
Hours: varies



Diploma Option 2: The graduation requirements for this special diploma include being employed and earning more than minimum wage; earning required credits with a 2.0 grade point average; and mastering Sunshine State Standard competencies as well as employability standards. This high school diploma is for qualifying individuals who otherwise may not be succeeding because of disabilities or other obstacles.

PARENT CORNER

- Discussion starter: Who has influenced your own career choices? Help your child make connections with positive career role models. Career and technical education teachers are excellent resources for your child to learn more about career possibilities.
- Is your child struggling with the traditional high school approach? Do everything you can to help him or her obtain a diploma. Perhaps they might qualify for an on-the-job training (OJT) program with an Option II diploma. Find out more from a guidance counselor.
- "I'm thankful to my Mom for teaching me how to cook and clean up and for just being there for me." King Blair, Jr. For further information contact Diploma Option II Job Coach Stewart Bergman at 941- 708-8770, ext. 2183.

FCAT reading comprehension QUESTION

★ In the article, how did King Blair demonstrate to his employer that he should be hired?

Answer: He worked hard, he worked fast, he had good skills, and he even volunteered to work without pay over the summer.

What's on the WEB?

- <http://www.manatee.k12.fl.us/sites/mti/culinaryarts/index.html>
- www.chef2chef.net
- www.foodnetwork.com



EdVantage Strategic Objective #3: Each student will continually participate in the democratic process.



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