APPRENTICESHIP

A Word From an Apprentice

What does apprenticeship mean to you?

Heather Blevins
Steamfitter Apprentice, UA Local 342

"I am an Apprentice and fourth generation Steamfitter out of UA Local 342.

I was working three jobs. I baked at a local cafe in the mornings, worked in our local parks department's community centers in the evenings and cleaned houses on weekends. I was beginning to feel burned out and it showed.

One day, my Aunt and Uncle, who are both Steamfitters out of Local 342, told me 342 was going to be accepting applications in a few months and asked if I would be interested in applying.

I was immediately filled with self-doubt but I knew my lifestyle wasn't sustainable as it was and I needed to make a serious change. No matter how hard I worked it felt like I could not get ahead. I signed up for math tutoring to prepare for the aptitude test and submitted my application.

Joining Local 342 was the best decision I have ever made. Not only do I now have a clear career path, I know I am getting the best education and training available.

The most rewarding part of my apprenticeship are the connections I have made and the support shown by my [union] brothers and sisters. I know if I ever have a question I can reach out to someone, whether it's identifying a part I've never seen before or troubleshooting a tricky test.

After I complete my apprenticeship, I hope to have the opportunity to travel abroad. I have always wanted to work at McMurdo Station in Antarctica; maybe they'll need union fitters in a couple of years.

If you're considering a union apprenticeship, find out what the application process is for the union you're interested in and ask about any available prep classes. Get a head

start. Don't be discouraged, everyone starts at the beginning. Lastly, when I start to feel overwhelmed by a task I remember what one of my teachers said in my first semester, 'How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time.'"