

Apprenticeship Works for KIMBERLY-CLARK



John Krebs (left) points out a photo of his father working at Kimberly-Clark in the 1960's to Dr. Tim Hardee (right).



Dr. Tim Hardee recently toured the Kimberly-Clark facility in Beech Island to see their Maintenance Apprenticeship program in action. While there, he spoke about the program's benefits with John Krebs, Development Coordinator at Kimberly-Clark.

Dr. Tim Hardee: Tell me how Kimberly-Clark got involved in the apprenticeship program.

John Krebs: We have found it to be a struggle to hire highly skilled technical resources from the outside alone, so we decided that we needed to develop our own maintenance technicians.

Dr. Hardee: How did you go about identifying folks to participate in the apprenticeship program?

JK: We draw from our operations workforce. We have a process in place where they all take a test of a technical nature. We select the top test scorers and bring them in to the program.

JK: It's a huge benefit to Kimberly-Clark. The people that we put in the program have already worked here a minimum of three years, so we know what kind of people we're going to get in our program. Since they come from the operations workforce, they know how to operate the machines, and to me there's nobody better to work on the machines than the people that know how to operate them.

Dr. Hardee: Talk to us about how your apprentices compare to those folks who come to you straight off the street.

JK: Because the apprentices already work for Kimberly-Clark, and we give them the specific training on our equipment and processes, I feel safe saying that when our apprentices graduate from the program, they have process and equipment specific skills that most people we hire off of the street would not have. This is a big advantage for Kimberly-Clark and for the apprentices in regards to getting work done safely and efficiently.

You have to have a skilled workforce. Without that, you can't run efficiently. If you can't run efficiently, you can't be competitive. To me, apprenticeship is the key to success. ■



Kenneth Boyd (left) describes the benefits of his apprenticeship to Dr. Tim Hardee (right).

LEARNING ON THE JOB IS THE WAY TO GO

Dr. Hardee also spoke with Kenneth Boyd, a graduate of Kimberly-Clark's apprenticeship program, who is now an Electrical Reliability Technician and Maintenance Mechanic.

Dr. Hardee: Tell me how the apprenticeship program benefitted you and prepared you for the job you do here at Kimberly-Clark.

Kenneth Boyd: Electrical reliability involves process maintenance, skilled C programming, motion programming, servo drives, and robotics. They put us through a three-year program that was built by technicians that work here and that have been in this field of work for most of their lives. That was coupled with computer-based training, so there were hours of that. It created an accelerated learning curve, in my opinion.

Dr. Hardee: When you were going through the apprenticeship program, were you able to apply some of what you learned on the job?

KB: Absolutely, every day. We're out here 40 to 50 hours a week working hands-on with what we're learning in class.

Dr. Hardee: Tell me how the apprenticeship program has benefitted Kimberly-Clark.

KB: I'm a big advocate of the apprenticeship program. Learning on the job, I think is the way to go. I hope a lot of companies realize that investing in the people that you already have working for you can be a good thing. The talent really is there, you just have to identify them and invest some time and money into them.

