

Tools for the TRADE

FFA equipped Mississippi Alumnus Levi Richardson with the confidence to get the job done. – By Kim Hill

Although Levi Richardson has an aptitude for making things, he credits FFA with providing the tools to build his success in the Mississippi workforce.

Richardson joined the FFA junior program in middle school. “I loved it so much I stayed in FFA until my high school graduation,” he says.

Richardson equates Newton County High School’s FFA chapter to a “big family of students who share similar passions for agriculture and leadership.” He felt at home in FFA, and says the leadership skills he gained as a

member were his biggest takeaway.

“I’ve always been mechanically inclined,” says Richardson, who served his chapter as sentinel. “But I was never the type to jump out of my comfort zone or try to be a leader. I learned how to do those things [in FFA].”

Skills to Succeed

After high school, Richardson enrolled in the precision machining program at East Central Community College in Decatur, Miss.

“I’ve always found creating something out of nothing to be interesting,” Richardson says.

During his time at East Central Community College, Richardson began interning at Addy Metal Fabrication, making precision parts and fabricating items from blueprints. He joined Mid South Baking Company as an engineering technician in 2021.

Mid South was later acquired by C.H. Guenther & Son, a manufacturer of food products that include the buns and English muffins made at the Pelahatchie, Miss., plant where Richardson works. His job as an engineering technician is to keep the production machinery running.

“I do a little bit of electrical troubleshooting, repairs, installing equipment and mechanical troubleshooting — it’s really a jack-of-all-trades job,” Richardson says. “I like the challenges of figuring out what’s wrong or learning something new. I also enjoy getting my hands dirty and making something go.”

Given his skill set, Richardson’s supervisors encouraged him to seek additional training. With 100% tuition support from his employer, he completed an associate’s degree in mechanical engineering at Holmes Community College. He’s also considering further career development by enrolling in a bachelor’s degree program in the future.

“I attribute a lot of my success to being in FFA,” Richardson says. “In college, I was part of another team in SkillsUSA. I probably wouldn’t have joined if I hadn’t been in FFA and seen what being part of an organization can do for you. I would have been way too nervous and shy to go on job interviews, and now I’ve done several to get to where I am. FFA gave me the confidence to get out there.”



Photography: Sarah Laird



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