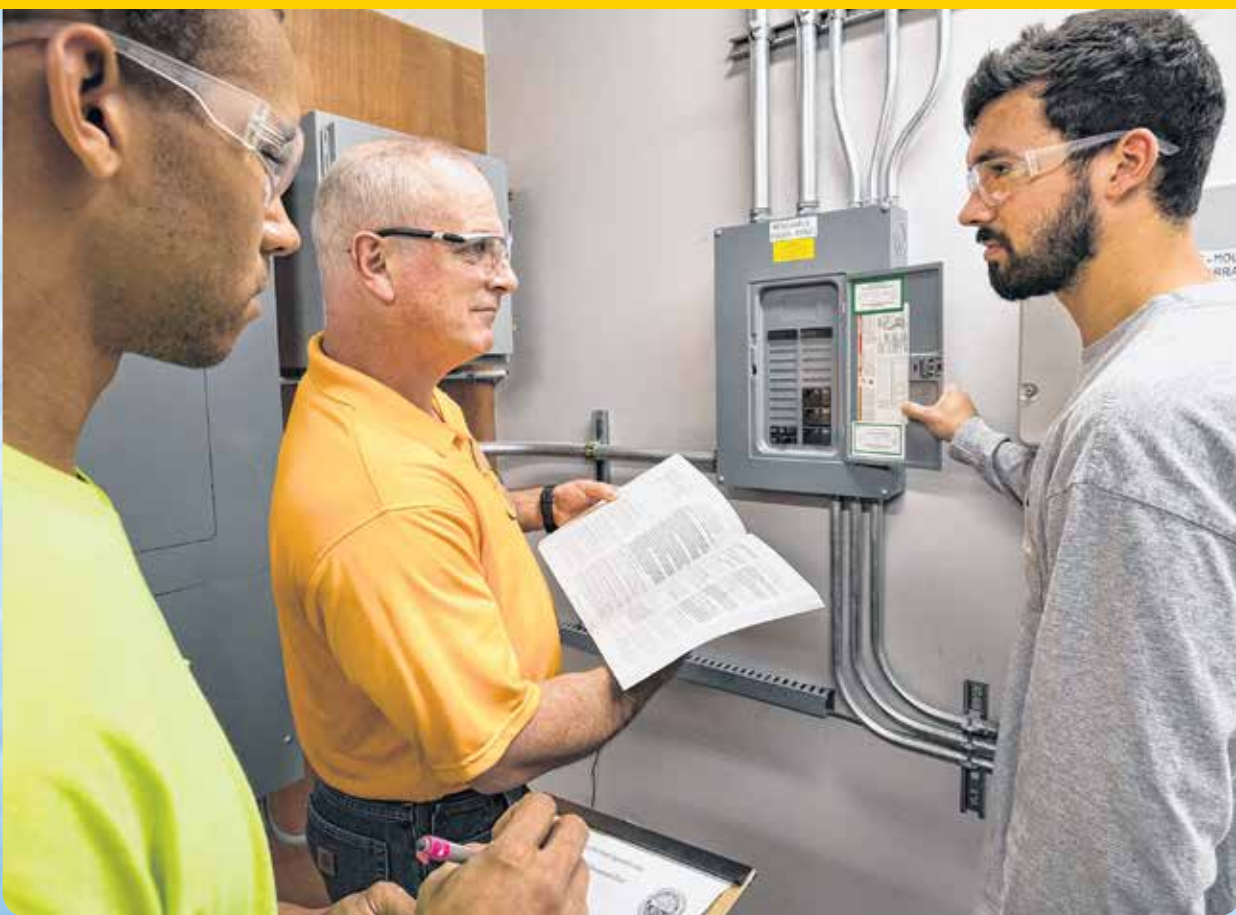


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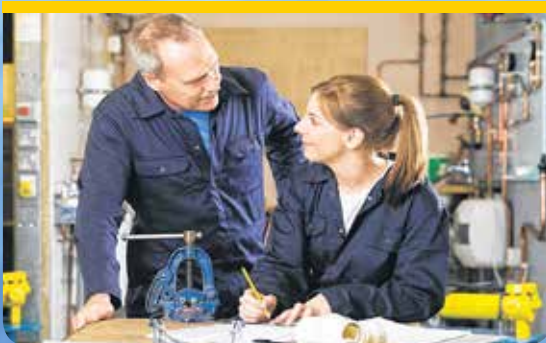
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From the military to a *building trade*

Jimmy Jensen, 30, of Cedar Rapids, a graduate of Cedar Rapids Jefferson, admits he wouldn't have guessed he'd become an electrician.

"I was active duty in the military for seven years," he says. When he was ready to get out of the service, his brother, who is a sheet metal worker, suggested he look into a building trade. "So I decided to go in and talk to them. I applied for it, and here I am."

Jensen is in the fourth year of his five-year apprenticeship and regularly takes classes at the IBEW Training Center on Johnson Avenue NW in Cedar Rapids.

"I never thought I'd be an electrician, but I've learned a ton about everything having to do with electrical and a lot of other small things that you wouldn't think would have to do with it. At our training center, we have elaborate labs to learn how to work on transformers and generators, solar power, all sorts of big industrial." In addition, the training center teaches everything there is to know about residential electrical work.



Jimmy Jensen, wife Tessa and kids Jayvin and Kaydence

Jensen is the first to admit he had never worked with electrical before. "I knew the same thing everybody else does about electricity, which is 'Don't mess with it.'"

But he says that going from the military to the construction world was an easy transition. "It's been a good fit for me. To be honest, when I first got in, I was worried if I could pick all this up and run with it, but, like everyone, the more you

learn it and do it, the easier it gets. I like seeing the end product. Whether you're running pipe or wiring up a panel, once it's done, you can say, 'I did that,' and it looks good. That's my favorite part.

He has done electrical work at General Mills, International Paper and the DoubleTree Hotel downtown, among others. Jensen is proud of how much the local unions are involved in the community. "A lot of unions do a lot for the community, especially with United Way. We're very involved in the community and I don't think a lot of people see that."

Outside of work

Jensen and his wife have two children — a 5-year-old son and 1-month-old daughter. "We like to do a lot of stuff with our kids." His young son is involved in soccer and tae kwon do. "I played soccer as a kid but always wanted to do karate or tae kwon do. I'm kind of living my life through him again," he jokes.

'Never too late' to *make a change* in your life

At 40, Jason Smithson had a good job, but he was looking for a change. Now 43, Smithson, of Ladora, is a boilermaker apprentice and couldn't be happier.

"People may think it's too late to start over at 30, 35, 40 years old. It's not," he says. "For me, to start a program like this at 40 years old was scary, with a wife and kids, but it's been pretty good for me."

As a boilermaker, his job involves a lot of welding and rigging. He's currently working at an ethanol plant in Iowa Falls. Projects can vary a great deal, from work at a refinery or powerhouse to a chemical plant or factory.

"You get an honest day's pay for an honest day's work. And you get treated with dignity and respect. I'm enthusiastic about it because I enjoy it." He adds, "There's people looking out for you, a brotherhood. You can tell everyone cares."

He and his wife have five kids, with two still at home in middle school and high school.

"You can do an apprenticeship with a family," he says. "If you have a family and you're older, it's a matter of how are you going to feel about yourself at the end of the day. If you're not happy, this is something you should consider. People shouldn't be afraid to make a change."



Jason Smithson, daughter Madyson, son Rementon and wife Lynn. Not pictured are their older children, Stacey, Dawn and Marissa.

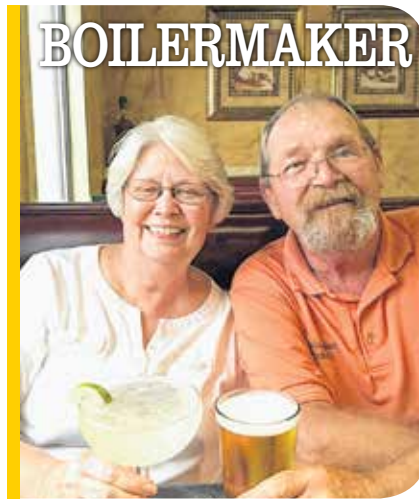
Retiree proud of his years in the trade

Many of us only think about “boilermakers” a few times a year, when the Hawkeyes take on the Purdue Boilermakers. But truth be told, boilermakers make important contributions to our nation’s industrial infrastructure every day of the year.

Jim Van Zuuk, 67, of Cedar Rapids, is now retired, but is very proud of his years as a boilermaker. “I spent 35 years in the trade, and I loved every minute of it.”

Before retiring at 55, Van Zuuk worked on a variety of projects, including building and maintaining coal-fired power plants and nuclear power plants, including the Duane Arnold nuclear power plant near Palo.

At large installations, Van Zuuk worked on tanks that were larger than life. “Think of a square box



Jim & Lori Van Zuuk

40-by-50 feet square and sometimes 200 feet long. Some boxes could be 200 feet tall.”

Van Zuuk is grateful that he found a career he enjoyed after experiencing a certain amount of discrimination as a young man. “I lost one eye

as a boy when I was 10 years old. I graduated high school in 1968. All my buddies were going into the service. I tried to enlist, but they wouldn’t have me because I only have one eye.” He was turned down for one job after another because he couldn’t pass the company physical or couldn’t qualify for insurance.

He happened to run into an acquaintance who steered him toward the boilermaking trade. He admits that with only one eye, he has very little depth perception, “but I found my niche in welding.”

Van Zuuk says the boilermaking trade has changed over the years, with more of a focus on safety today.

“Working with fire, it’s exciting and exhilarating.” Although he never went through an apprenticeship program, he recommends the

boilermaking trade to anyone. “I thank the Lord for it. It was an awesome experience for me.”

Outside of work,

“I’ve been married to my wife for 35 years. I’m very proud that we’re still together.” He admits that his work often took him on the road, “and that can be hard on a family, but you feed your family and you go to work. I give my wife, Lori, a lot of credit.” The Van Zuuks have two adult daughters and two grandsons. When he first retired 12 years ago, Van Zuuk says he played a lot of golf. “But now, I enjoy being busy doing mostly nothing,” he jokes.



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