

# Signing Day

## 72 Crawford Tech students accept job offers

**By Mike Crowley**  
MEADVILLE TRIBUNE

Lucas Aldrich knows where he will be at 7 a.m. June 8, four days after completing his electrical occupations program at Crawford Tech and graduating from Conneaut Area Senior High.

Actually, he knows where he'll be at 6:55 a.m. that Monday: RE Johnson Electric in Saegertown, ready to start his first full day of work as an apprentice electrician a few minutes early.

"I enjoy working with them a lot — you learn every day," Aldrich said Thursday after signing his letter of intent to accept the position during Crawford Tech's eighth annual signing day event. "It's great people — really enjoyable."

Like most of the other participants in Crawford Tech's cooperative education program who walked across the Meadville Area Senior High auditorium stage with their future employers and then signed on the proverbial dotted line, Aldrich has already been working part-time for the company he'll be joining. Most recently, he has been part of a team replacing lightbulbs as part of an energy efficiency upgrade at Meadville Medical Center's One Vernon Place.

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SHANNON ROAE/Meadville Tribune  
Above: Five Crawford Tech students, from left, Mason Welcheck, Colin Reichel, Landon Plyler, Jack Fuhrer, and Lucas Aldrich, sign contracts to work at R.E. Johnson Electric during the annual Signing Day Ceremony at Meadville Area Senior High Thursday. Left: Crawford Tech student Shannon Laughery signs a contract to work at Highpoint Tool & Machine during the annual Signing Day Ceremony at Meadville Area Senior High Thursday.

# Job

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In all, 72 students signed on with 50 employers. None of the regional companies hired more than RE Johnson,

however. The electrical contractor is set to pick up five new faces, three of whom have been working part-time through the Crawford Tech's co-op program.

"They're all very good guys, very hard workers," said Project Supervisor Char-

lie Johnson, who accompanied the five signees onstage along with Operations Manager Bill Braden and signed the various letters below the prospective hires. "They always come in ready to learn more — you never stop learning in this trade."

As the group made its way through the line in front of a Crawford Tech-themed backdrop for celebratory photos, Mark Sippy, owner of Highpoint Tool and Machine in Saegertown, and Shannon Laughery, a senior at Cambridge Springs Junior-Senior High, stood nearby. Unlike Aldrich, Laughery has a week off before she begins her full-time position in machining at Highpoint, but in other respects they shared similar outlooks on the near future.

"I'm excited about being able to be independent," said

Laughery, who has worked part-time at Highpoint through the co-op program, "and work not just a job, but a career."

As with the crew from RE Johnson, it was again hard to tell who was more excited about the impending start day — the prospective employer or the prospective employee.

"It's been good having her — she's willing to work and has a good attitude," Sippy said. "We're willing to train all the skills, so we're happy to have her."

Holding a "We hired a 'Tech' graduate" yard sign, Sippy contrasted the signing day event with the worker scarcity that has increasingly become the norm for tool and die shops.

"The whole industry is probably desperate to hire," he said. "It's hard to find any-

body that's willing to work. We can train the skills if we find the attitude and the work ethic."

The MASH auditorium stage Thursday afternoon appeared to be a good place to look for those engaged in such a search.

"It's a huge day," Crawford Tech Co-op Education Coordinator Tina Cutshall-Craft said.

Crawford Tech had 135 students in its co-op program this year, according to Cutshall-Craft. In addition to the 72 who signed with employers, others are set to go to college or other post-secondary programs, with still others going into the military.

One other statistic serves as a reminder that the program's impact extends beyond the students and employers to affect the entire community.

Over the course of the school year, Cutshall-Craft said, students in the co-op program earned more than \$862,000.

Because of numbers like that, employers weren't the only ones looking to the MASH stage for something worth holding onto. Crawford County Board of Commissioners Chairman Eric Henry, the invited speaker for the event, wasn't hiring, but he was making a pitch to the soon-to-be employees.

"To the graduates," Henry said, "we do need your buy-in. We want you to live here, buy a house here, raise a family here. We need you to be a champion for this county."

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