

# SERVICES For You

# SERVICIOS Para Usted



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## A Bright Future

By Sara Guardado



Brandon Verlinden

Brandon Verlinden was born and raised in Goodland, Kansas (KS). He began working in agriculture during the summer of his freshman year in high school. He worked on irrigation sprinklers and fell in love with being out in the country fixing systems watering and growing crops. After leaving that job he then worked on a goat farm taking care of 60 to 80 goats. Every day he would clean pens, feed the animals, herd them to pasture, fix fences and assist with kidding season during the winter. It was hard work but he loved it.

While in high school he had the opportunity to weld a little in the old welding shop. He was amazed to learn that by simply heating metal it could be fused together. Brandon was also surprised how easy welding was for him. He told me that he became really good at it with very little practice. "The welding shop at my high school helped me find my true passion and that is why I decided to train in this field." said Brandon. "I learned about the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) when Sarah the Client Service Agent from Wichita, came to the welding school and gave a presentation about the NFJP. I submitted an application and she called me to set up an appointment to determine if I qualified. Fortunately, I did qualify and SER Corporation assisted me financially." "I was able to buy tools and a new toolbox which I needed to start my new job at Koch Industries."

After graduation Brandon moved to Hutchinson. He accomplished one of his goals and that was to become a welder and land a good job. In the future he hopes to one day own his own business.

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# Brooks Rawles

By Henry Coronado



Brooks Rawles is a 34 year old, long term agriculture worker from Highland, Kansas. He has worked cattle and cropland since 2005, working for NB Angus Farms. He, his wife and four children have lived in the Highland area for many years. After his wife suffered a heart attack, she became unable to work, and went on disability. It was this life altering change that made Brooks decide to go back to school to be able to better support his family.

After careful consideration, Mr. Rawles chose Highland Community College Technical Center HCCTC), to pursue an undergraduate certificate in Diesel Technology. Brooks explained, “I chose HCCTC because I knew it had a great diesel tech program, and it was close to home.” When asked why he chose to go after a career as a Diesel Tech, Brooks’ answer was an easy one. “My dad was a technician at John Deere for 22 years, and it has been something that I have always wanted to do.”

Making the decision to go back to school was not easy for Brooks, due to the financial hardship it would further put on his family. He was not sure how he would get the money to pay for the tuition; but eventually received some grants and loans. Henry Coronado, a SER Corporation Client Service Agent met Mr. Rawles and was able to determine Brooks’ eligibility for the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP).

Mr. Rawles graduated from Highland Community College Technical Center in May 2017, with a Diesel Technology Certificate. He accepted a position as a Diesel Technician with Floyd’s Truck Repair in Sabetha, Kansas. At Floyd’s, Brooks does all aspects of diesel repair. As he says, “I work on it all, from front to back!”

Mr. Coronado, the Client Service agent, also visited recently with Mr. Rawles’ supervisor. He shared that he is very pleased with Brooks as an employee, as he is dependable, always shows up to work early, follows instructions and is hardworking.

When asked his final thoughts of the NFJP, Brooks has this to say, “In my opinion, it’s a heck of a good program for people like me. It helped me out a lot. There are people in this world that struggle and need help going back to school so that they can get better jobs and provide a better life for their families.”

## A Company Built on Strong Character and Family Values

By Mike Medina



In 1916, C.J. Defehr saw a unique opportunity, and opened a John Deere dealership to service the needs of local farmers in and around Corn, Oklahoma. Not long after, in 1923, neighboring businessman Otto Lorenz added the John Deere line to his hardware, grocery, and automobile dealership in Hitchcock, Oklahoma.

Over many years, both families' businesses experienced growth and success. They shared the same principles and values when running their businesses and had a healthy rivalry. However the unique environment between the competing dealers led to an interesting conversation between grandsons almost 100 years later. In just five short weeks, the two independently successful family businesses, with a mutual respect for on another, joined forces. They combined almost 200 years of experience to create Western Equipment and never looked back.

Western Equipment is a company built on strong character and family values. The company has a rich history in agricultural, residential, and commercial equipment. Recognized as one of the John Deere's top-tier dealership, Western Equipment is now focused on a new vision.....one of further growth and new ways to provide solutions to their loyal customers.

Their service team consists of over 100 service technicians, including 20 John Deere Master Technicians, dedicated to keeping their customers equipment operating efficiently and consistently. In May of this year, Client Service Agent Mike Medina traveled to Clinton, Oklahoma and met with Amy Crumbley HR Coordinator for Western Equipment. The company agreed to participate in the On-the-Job Training program and our first contract was signed. Plans are underway to sign three more OJTs between SER and Western Equipment. SER looks forward to a long partnership with Western Equipment.



## Never Too Late to Make a Change

By Roberta Pionalto



David Perrin

David Perrin, 34, from Oberlin, Kansas (KS), was a seasonal farmworker for most of his adult life. He worked small farm jobs during the harvest season living paycheck to paycheck to pay bills. David woke up one day and decided it was time to make a change in his life. He has always been intrigued with the electrical field. It seemed to be an easy fit and was something he really enjoyed.

David believed returning to school at his age would be a barrier but he soon discovered that it was the cost of training that would be his biggest hurdle.

David decided to enroll into the Electrical

Technician Program at Northwestern Kansas Technical College (NWKTC). He was able to find an old camper and sat it on a friend's land and lived in it while attending school. At NWKTC in Goodland, KS, he met SER Client Service Agent Roberta Pionalto. Roberta talked to David about the National Farmworker Jobs Training Program.

SER Corporation helped David with tuition assistance plus housing and transportation expenses. In May of this year, he graduated and received the Student of the Year award from the Electrical Technology Department. He also was inducted into the National Honor Society of Technical Colleges along with being one of the top finishers in the national skills competition. A teacher of David's said he was one of the best students to ever walk through his classroom.

After graduation David interviewed for a position with Interstates Electrical of Fort Collins, Colorado. They were very impressed with David's technician/journeyman credential but also by his work ethics. Interstates hired David and soon he will be making over six figures in his first year! He will also receive travel and per diem reimbursement. His job entails being flown to various locations to work on numerous electrical projects around the United States.

For many years David thought his life would consist of living pay check to pay check but fate had a different story. Even though going back to school was difficult, he does not regret any part of it. He was thankful for the help he received from SER Corporation which enabled him to succeed more than he ever imagined. He encourages anyone who is not happy with the way their life is going to look at making a change. David said, "Do something you've always dreamed about. It is never too late to make the change".



## Hard Work Results in a Dream Come True

By Vicki Needham



Tyler Hageman

Tyler Hageman is a young man from a small town in central Kansas. He was a seasonal farmworker and had a dream to become an Agriculture Equipment Technician. He was used to working long hard hours during the season. Unfortunately, the work wasn't full-time nor was he able to work year round. In addition the job offered no benefits. Tyler knew he had to find a career which could provide him with a living wage and decided upon fulfilling his dream to become a full-time Agriculture Equipment Technician.

The intake and assessment for SER Corporation's National Farmworker Jobs Program was completed and it was determined that he qualified. SER Corporation is the direct state grantee for this program funded by the Department of Labor. A plan was developed by Tyler and Vicki Needham, SER Client Service Agent, to help complete the two year program at North Central Kansas Technical College (NCKT).

Tyler received two years of tuition assistance and was required to meet regularly with Vicki to ensure his success. During this time Vicki witnessed Tyler's passion for his chosen career and how he excelled in his training. Tyler also participated in the Rent Smart presentation sponsored by the Kansas and Missouri NFJPs and was provided with career services to help him with job interviews.

By the end of Tyler's second year, he was actively searching for a full-time permanent position. An On-The-Job Training contract was developed and Tyler was offered a job with Republican Valley Irrigation. Now, Tyler is a full-time salaried employee and increased his yearly income by almost \$45,000 in the first year. In addition he receives benefits and no longer worries about how he is going to support himself after the farm work season ends.

Tyler stated, "Vicki helped me pay for part of my tuition and the only thing she required was the once a month meetings as well as doing my best in school. That included having good attendance. She often stated that you can't learn if you aren't at school. She always expected me to do well and complimented me when I did."

It has been a joy to watch Tyler who worked so hard to achieve his dream and become successful. Tyler has been an amazing young man to know and he will go very far in his chosen career. Thank you for all your hard work and perseverance in achieving your goal.



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