



Podcast Transcript | *The Fix*

Season 1, Episode 4

Date: February 9, 2022

Guest: Jason Shank

Run Time: 37:04

Questions or Feedback: thefix@oatey.com

[music]

Katherine: Welcome to *The Fix*, the podcast made for the trades, where we sit down with inspiring individuals across the trades to discuss their unique take on the industry, including career paths, job site stories, overcoming challenges, and everything in between. I'm your host, Katherine, a marketer here at Oatey with my co-host and friend, Doug, one of Oatey's resident experts in all things trades. *The Fix* is more than a podcast. It's a community, a community built to support trades people and inspire the next generation of essential pros. Let's start the conversation.

[music]

Katherine: Welcome back to another episode of *The Fix*, a conversation around the trades.

Doug: Katherine, I'm going to tell you something. Our library of guests at this point in time is just off the hook.

Katherine: I know.

Doug: I'm telling you, I was so excited about today that I went home and studied the Ohio State Plumbing Code and I also brushed up on some of my application techniques because we have a real expert in house today.

Katherine: All right. We might have to flip the script here today, and you might have to be the student instead of being the trainer today.

Doug: I'm ready to assume the apprentice position at this point.

Katherine: I love it. Well, our guest today is training director, Jason Shank from Cleveland, Ohio local union, where he oversees training for all apprentices and journeymen for re-certification. He is also the president of ASSE International. Jason is a first-generation trade pro who paved the way for himself within the industry, helping both young adults and those in their late 20s who may have already obtained their four-year degree and are looking for a fresh start. Welcome to the conversation, Jason.

Jason Shank: Thanks for having me.

Katherine: It's great. Well, hey, we want to talk a little bit about your journey and how you got here. As a first-generation plumbing professional, tell us about your decision to go to a four-year college and then transition into the trades.

Jason: Yes. It started all off as far as ending up in the trades. It started off just by happenstance. Going to college, it was like everybody else, not to show my age, but I graduated high school in '92 here out of a Northeast Ohio school system. There was no other options at the time. There was still manufacturing and jobs. A lot of friends and people went to manufacturing, family members were at a plant. They got in.

Others went into military, which is still a choice that a lot of people are doing today. Unlike the manufacturing though, there's not a whole lot of those choices left around. The idea was you had to go to college and that was the expectation. As you go through you just-- okay, well, I was interested in music and I had always played guitar. There was this Bowling Green State University.

Katherine: Oh, Falcon. Hey.

Jason: It had a great jazz program. An instructor I had met a few times, Chris Buzzelli, was up there. I went there and said I'll try this, because I had no other options or interest. I would've never ended up at college. I was pretty much done with school. I went and did that and graduated in four years and realized that life is now starting, right? [laughs]

Katherine: Right, yes.

Jason: You got to hustle a lot with those type of careers and things. To make ends meet, I started working with a friend of my brothers, who is still a journeyman plumber with Plumbers Local 55, ended up getting organized.

Katherine: Cool.

Jason: He had ran his own small construction for plumbing, services and things like that. I had started working with him a couple days and then it becomes three, four days and it became five days. Then I was out of a job because he was shutting down his business and going to work for contractors for Local 55. They said, "Well, come on in if you want." I said, "Okay."

I had already started to enjoy it. It's a hands-on kind of education. You get to see at the end of the day that the water closet flushes, or somebody has a shower, you fix

File name: Episode 4.mp3

somebody's sink, and all that kind of stuff. There's a self-satisfaction to a lot of that. I ended up getting into the training program that we had at the local there. Just started from there, switched over to apprenticeship, graduated the apprenticeship five years later.

Then I started teaching almost immediately out of the box. Most of that was because- you had mentioned the plumbing code at the start of this, is because the State of Ohio switched from-- Well, the City of Cleveland here and the State of Ohio had their own code while everybody went to one of the national codes around 2000, 2001. That's about when I was getting out of my time. We go to take our master's test or our journeyman plumbers test. They're like, "All right. Well, we're going to teach you this other code now. You have to take a test on that."

Katherine: Did you have any mentors throughout the way who helped guided you? I know you said you came and worked for a friend and got you connected then into your Local 55, but when you look back, do you say like, 'Yes, this person really made an impact,' or many people maybe made an impact?

Jason: Yes, there's ones all over the place, especially when you are in a business like this where you're on the job site and you're going to different people all the time, you're going to different job sites working with different crews, you're not always working with the same individuals. How the apprenticeship or the other term people like use is mentoring programs go, is that is what they're doing. They're passing on their information. It's not just the knowledge, it is their attitudes, it's their work skills, it's how they view life are all part of that, mixed into that, and it's your job to kind of figure out what you want to do and how you want to do.

Yes, early on I was with a company that I got placed with and very early on, there was two extra. It was two brothers, one older, one younger, that must have saw something or enjoyed and I worked with them almost on every job for a couple years. Then when I started going to other jobs, it's just kind of snowballed from there. I would say introduction-wise, those two were the biggest ones. They set the tone for me of you show up every day and always be prepared, and moving through those things that set the tone that gave me the opportunities or the doors that open later on in life.

Katherine: Sure. Yes. That's great, and then did you ever feel like too it made you want to be a mentor to others that were coming into the trades and starting to learn?

Jason: Yes, absolutely, and that's the fostering nature of the program that they're overseeing now, is yes. Monday and Tuesday, this week, we had some Max Hayes students from the Max Hayes City of Cleveland schools.

The Cleveland building trades, some of us have agreements where we have school apprenticeship or school trainee programs with them. Part of that is a couple times a year, the students that are in those programs have the opportunity if they have their attendances and their grades to come to any of our trading centers, the plumbers, pipefitters, sheet metal worker, whoever it might be, electricians, and spend two days with our eight-hour class during the day that we're teaching apprentice.

We had four Max Hayes students come in. Now all of a sudden, I have these first-year and second-year apprentices who have some skills and now they're in charge of sitting next to that person in class, say "No, no, no, this is how you do this math problem. No, no, no, this is what they mean," and then we take them out in the shop in the afternoon, and they're teaching them how to actually-

Katherine: That's great.

Jason: -install something and now they're taking ownership and it flips for them now too. They're like, "Oh, I guess I am the teacher now," so it's a very, very nice setup. We do something similar with Boy Scouts plumbing merit badge, we've been doing probably seven, eight years now. Spend a Saturday and bring in boy scouts and girl scouts, and it's the same thing.

We have our apprentices come in, and they teach them, "Okay, this is how you're going to solder. This is how you're going to thread pipe. This is how you're going to change out a P-trap," and we oversee it to make sure because we are dealing with minors and stuff. Everybody's a merit badge counselor, but at the end of the day, those apprentices, so it's the constant churning of that.

Katherine: What's interesting, you brought up a Max Hayes, because we also have a partnership with them in regards to manufacturing, which is right across the street here from the university. Just maybe three weeks ago, we had girl scouts of Northeast Ohio here, and they got one of their badges for doing some work here. It's all of us, I feel like, doing our part to help bring awareness and to talk.

We talked about manufacturing and we also talked about plumbing because I think it's important for us as a manufacturer not only to talk about in a brand our trade of manufacturing but also the trades that we service, which we have a lot of people who utilize our product in electrical, and roofing, and across many trades that we need to continue like we're doing today to have in the conversation of how we gain that pipeline. Tell us a little bit more about your role at Plumbers 55, and what does a typical day look like for you? What type of students do you serve? Is every day different?

Jason: Yes, I think with everybody's world these days, every day's a little different,-

Katherine: [laughs] That's true.

Jason: -but prior to COVID and schools shutting down, we had for the past year and a half we're doing remote training, which is hard because we try to do at least half of it is educational training in the classic sense and then the other half is okay, we just learned all this, now go out in the shop and do it, whatever that projects may be, and you don't have that we're doing remote.

Prior to COVID, typical day is going to be starting. We were lucky we do with our contractors in the union is they get paid for their training. In the five-year apprenticeship program, you're looking at about probably around 1,000 hours of training, hands-on training and classroom training, over the five years. It's about 200 hours a year that you also will get credit from Tri-C Community College is also a

partner, and you get college credit building towards a two-year degree and say plumbing or electrical or things of that nature.

They would come in for eight hours and instead of going to a job site at seven o'clock in the morning, they come here and we would spend three or four hours going over math, science, or installation techniques, drawings, learning all those things that maybe they're not getting a chance to, or reinforcing the things that they get on the job. An apprenticeship is 90% in the field, getting paid while you're actually there, doing the job, not accruing debt. Then you come and see us for 200 hours a school year and you get paid for majority of that. There are night classes.

My normal day is okay, we make sure instructors have everything for the morning and get going and everybody show up and we do all that kind of stuff, and they run it like a normal day. We have full-time instructors, Doreen Cannon's one of them and that we've had-- That's how I started. I was doing that as a nighttime instructor and a full-time, and then go through the day and they get that done.

That may be, like I said, on Monday is first year class, usually. Tuesday is second year class, third, fourth, fifth as we go through. Then at the end, we get all that cleaned up and then probably as everybody's getting done with their job at 4:30, or 3:30, 4:00, they start coming in and they have their dinner and some more apprentices. We may have trainees showing up that night for night classes that usually start and go from like 5:00 to 9:00. Now you have this changeover and everybody's got problems.

[laughter]

Jason: I deal with that towards the end of the day, and then get all the classes settled and get all the different instructors whatever they need, and rinse and repeat. It's seven to nine o'clock at night, Monday through Thursday most of the time. We absolutely stay off weekends as much as possible. Very rarely do we require anything on a Friday evening or Saturday or Sunday, so that's your time. They're considered a full-time student and you're working 40 hours a week in the field.

Doug: One of the things I heard you say and I think it's a great structure is you had said that the individual days, you have the first year, second year, third year, because big thing about getting into the trades a lot of times is confidence. If you stick a first-year apprentice in with a fourth-year apprentice, that first-year guy, he's going to sit back, he's not going to want to engage, he doesn't want to be embarrassed, okay? By having them all grouped together at the same learning stage in their career, I think that does a great job for building confidence.

Katherine: Yes, and I also- Doug, I picked up on paid. That's a really big feature. It's like you're getting paid for training, and you're getting paid to do this work. I think that that is a huge thing to be able to tell people that it's not like we're asking you to come in and give your time and learn about something, we're actually saying we're going to pay you to come in and learn something, which is totally different.

Doug: Absolutely.

Jason: The education is free. It's paid for. Like me as a member, I pay and I, myself, I work for the trust fund, which is oversaw by the contractors and the union. They sit at a table and they say, "Okay, this is the training we want. This is the trends we're seeing, this is how we want to do it, how many hours," and then they hire a guy like me to go ahead and administrate that and then we hire instructors to go ahead and train for those specific things. Every hour that somebody is working, they pay into this trust fund to pay for that apprentice to not have any costs for that school, not to incur debt, all that fun stuff. Then when they become the journey person, they pay into the fund, and they're paying for the next generation.

Katherine: Sure, absolutely.

Jason: It really works out well in that situation. You're debt-free, you're getting paid. At the end, you move on with life.

Doug: That's fantastic.

Katherine: I want to highlight on some of that Doreen talked about as well. One of our other guests, she talked about equal pay. Not only that, but there's equal pay for both men and women on the job, which I think is a really important thing to continue to highlight.

Doug: Yes, absolutely. Doreen, she did educate us on some challenges that are faced whenever the women do enter the trades. The support is there, conversation's always there. If you're treated as an equal, a lot of times you'll excel faster. If you're looked down upon for any reason whatsoever, the confidence goes down, I might not even want to come back, so I think that's fantastic how you guys have that team equality, the thought process.

Jason: Yes, and then the program that we're talking about is the Apprenticeship Program and it is registered with the State of Ohio Apprenticeship Council, it's regulated by the Department of Labor. It's in an actual agreement. When we just brought in 15 new apprentices in early October, we sat down and I had to explain, "All right, this is what your starting pay will be." Everybody's like, "Okay, that's good." I'm like, "Here's what it'll be six months from now. Here's what it'll be from a year." They're like, "What do you mean? I've never had a job where it's being spelled out that if I do A, B, C, and D, in six months' time I will get to this pay."

It's an actual contract and agreement that says, "We are going to provide this. If we're not providing this, you have the right to go ahead and say to the State of Ohio or the Department of Labor that, 'Hey, I'm not getting this.'" Then those problems are worked out if it happens. Then we're saying for you, "Yes, you're getting paid, it's free education, but we're going to require you to do these things and work these hours." Once they do that, they move up. Everybody seems a little shocked by that, but it's an actual signed agreement between that apprentice and the JATC or the apprenticeship program. They all work this way. It's all the same, it doesn't matter which trade you go into.

Doug: Now is the education that the students are getting at the union trade school, does that get them any kind of college type of degree also?

File name: Episode 4.mp3

Jason: Yes, and that gets into a little bit with the college thing. We are currently, and have been probably for 10 or 15 years now, in partnership with Tri-C Community College. What that does is that makes them a student at Tri-C, makes my training center an adjunct training facility through the college, and they get college credit for the stuff that they-

Katherine: That's great.

Jason: -take. They end up getting, going through our program, probably close to 50- I can't remember the numbers so I don't want to lie- but I think it was around 50 credit hours, almost 10 to 12 credit hours a year to do this. It's considered full-time. We have older students now. When I say older, people that may have done a year or two of college or have college, or even people that had a career of 10 years in something else which is from a college degree and then just switch. They still have done it. They're making \$15, \$16 an hour to begin with, they may have other bills, family obligations, they can use that and defer their loans if they want because they're a full-time student-

Katherine: Great point.

Jason: -through that. Then when they get to that point where they're making good money, or something in their life changes, now all of a sudden you're not a full-time student, but you're making \$38 an hour, it becomes a little easier to pay those debts back.

Katherine: Right, yes. Absolutely. Great point. I want to switch a little bit of the conversation about those who are considering a plumbing profession. You work with so many different people, individuals, students in different walks of life. Can you tell us what success typically looks like? In other words, what skills, what's personality traits that you find really work and translate well into the trades?

Jason: I would say this is probably not a surprise for anyone, but somebody that likes to work with their hands is usually somebody that excels in not just this career but any type of manual labor type idea. You have different stages. For my particular area, for plumbing and some of the other mechanical trades, there's a secondary component. You have to enjoy learning by doing, but you also have to have some more of the book part of things. There's a level of math you have to be able to get to and understand and comprehend. There's a level of understanding blueprint reading and mechanical reasoning.

If I do A, B is going to happen. If B happens, then C will. There's a little bit more thought process on those systems than, let's say, somebody has to have the math skills to be an apprentice and learn how to become a cement mason. There's square footage, there's all this stuff you have to do, there's manual, it's physical, but once everything is set, it's pretty much done. Whereas I may walk into your facility here and you may be calling me because you have a problem with your heating system, or I should say your water system. I have to understand this whole system, I have to be able to diagnose what's going on, where it's at, have the people skills, have everything else available to do this in order to just figure out what the problem is.

Katherine: Right.

Jason: Those type of people, where you can have both, where somebody let's just say is, more of a book-smart, somebody that is a hands-on learner and loves to just get in there and do it, somewhere in the middle, that person. If you can find people like that, they are the ones that become the leaders. They are the ones that really seem to excel.

Katherine: For those who want to get started, and even really so many high schoolers are often overwhelmed trying to say what they want to do with the rest of their lives, what advice would you give those interested in plumbing or even the trades?

Jason: I think everybody is struggled with this with the, let's just say, older industries and apprenticeships and building trades. I would say early industries is getting to that social media platform because none of us really do it but there is a ton of information out there. You find anything you want to learn how to do on YouTube. There's a ton of videos out there from these apprenticeship programs or these these unions and other resources, companies such as yourself that will put out little things about information and what it is. If you can get high school students to start looking at that, or you can get middle schoolers, maybe having projects on research what a plumber does.

Those are not the discussions that are going on. Anyway, I had mentioned before that we're in partnership with Tri-C Community College here. The thing that they've done is they've gotten into, I'm not sure middle school level yet, but high school level where they're doing college courses with their sophomores, juniors, seniors a lot of times. They've already gotten their thought process into that person's head and giving them college credit.

So, is the next step for somebody like me with an apprenticeship program is do I get a high school student program where they get credit and come in? Those are the discussions that we're starting to look at is using that model of while they've already been led down this path far enough, it's hard for me or anybody else to convince them not to go that path because that's what they've been led to say what it is. There's a lot of different great ideas going on. I'm not sure where things will end up being.

Katherine: No, I think it's great insight and I think there's a lot of things that all of us need to try to test and learn, see what's going to work, see what programs stick. I think the more brands, manufacturers, unions, plumbers are having the dialogue around the trades and showing the value and showing what you can gain for your life from it, talking about equal pay, talking about pay in training really will make an impact. It's about a lot of us getting our voices heard, and so that people can understand a little bit more.

Doug: You just mentioned, Katherine, you had said it's about trying different things. Jason, one of the questions I have for you is, are you set up in your training facilities to have someone of interest maybe want to try it out, maybe bring them in, let them participate in a couple of classes on a very low-level because logistics are always a

big deal but have them do a little bit of experience and try it on because then they might say, "This really isn't me," or they might say, "You know what? Yes, this is what I want to do"?

Jason: Yes. I'm going to say my program officially participates in a lot of these types of programs. To say that we have it just for our program, no. The Greater Cleveland building trades and contractors associations are trying different things. This summer, there's Cleveland building trades, and Cleveland Builds which is a contractor and building trades organization for promotion had tried a new program and we housed it this first year at our training center where people were able to apply and they got interviewed like you would normally do for a job.

Then they came in and for four weeks, two nights a week so they would go to work and then at 5:00 to 9:00, they came down to the training center. It was the middle of the summer. Nobody wants to be there. It's beautiful out. Showing that dedication that this is something they wanted to do and they were run through projects and education. They spent two hours in the classroom learning some things and then two hours applying that. We did that for eight nights. We had them on lifts, we had them building forms, mixing concrete, all different things that you could try and do and the different trades showed up and taught them here's what it's like, here's what to expect. There are more and more of those types of programs going on.

Doug: That's great. That is absolutely great. Let me recap this then, Katherine. I could try something out and not commit to a four-year college. I can get paid while I'm learning, I get a free notebook, I can get training from the very basics to the high level which makes me prepared for journeymen, and all I got to do is call Jason. So, I need your number.

[laughter]

Katherine: We talked a little bit about those who are in middle school or in high school, but I also think that there is a market maybe for those who are apprentices or individuals in their late 20s, early 20s, or maybe they did like yourself. They went to college, got out of the four-year degree, and like, "This isn't what I thought it was going to be." What are some of the common reasons you think people are looking for that fresh start and that trades is a good solution for them to make that fresh start?

Jason: It really comes out of the individuals. I think I've been doing as far as training director, 12 years. I don't have numbers, I don't have stats, really, but just my feeling of the whole is it really does come down to the individual. We've had students come right out of high school 18 years of age apply, get in by 18, 19, and do extremely well. Then we've had ones that just were not ready for it where, "What do you mean I have to go to work every day?" or they don't want to do any more school work and just weren't mature enough or weren't in a position in their life where this mattered. Where I have a career, I'm going to be making X amount of money, and I'm going to be able to raise my family.

They just didn't have enough responsibility or maturity enough to do that. It really depends on that individual. Where we're finding more success and where we're getting more and more of the percentage of applicants and people coming in are

File name: Episode 4.mp3

your people that have spent a couple of years in college, are people that maybe have joined the workforce three, four, five years and realized, "I'm not going anywhere with this. I don't see an avenue to progress any further." They hear one of their friends or somebody like that talk about, "Well, why don't you try this or try and get into an apprenticeship program?" and things of that nature.

We're seeing probably mid-20s is what's coming up. People that have had college, have some debt, people that maybe have families already or financial responsibilities, which, it really, really takes away a lot of the problems. I'm not saying that this group that I'm talking about is perfect. It's all dependent on the individual, but majority of them have been around the block once or twice and realized, "Okay, I better make a go with this."

We're not looking for somebody to do the five-year program and then walk away and never. We're looking for you to be around for 30, 35 years to then keep working and live your life and do that but help then educate the next one. Individuals come and go in the program all the time and there is no real problem with that. We have people who would just say, "Listen, this is not what I expected," and it's like, "Hey, fine, no harm no foul." Then you have other ones that you try to bring them along, right?

Katherine: Yes.

Jason: A lot of times, I say in my other part of the job you asked is a counselor a lot of times. Somebody needs to come in and just vent and tell me what their problems are and I'm like, "All right. What do we want to do about that?" "I'm good now, thanks." Then other ones that have serious problems or just haven't figured out what they want to do and it's like, well, there is a standard here and we have to treat everybody the same way as we were talking about the equality thing. If you can't do this or you don't want to do this, your choice will be made for you, that kind of situation.

Katherine: Right. It's black and white.

Jason: I don't want to paint it as this rosy thing either. People come into the program and leave the program all the time. There's nothing wrong with that. They just weren't either ready for it or they realized it wasn't for them, but at the end of the day, probably 70% finish.

Katherine: Finish? That's a great statistic.

Doug: Yes, that is a great statistic. The other thing is too, you said some don't finish. Some figure out that's not what they want, but I still feel that those individuals, even though they're leaving the program, even though they're leaving the organization, they can still walk away and say, "Hey, you know what? I tried something different and I can scratch that off on an avenue I don't want to go on."

Jason: Or in some other cases, it becomes that they realize, "Okay, I'm not going to do this for the rest of my life," but they learn those couple of skills or pick up some things and it blossoms into something else into their life, which isn't uncommon to happen. I get it. Not everybody wants to be up at 5:30, 6:00 in the morning and go

outside when it's snowing and go to work and spend eight hours in the cold and then go home and try not to fall asleep during dinner. You know what I mean? I get it and it's not for everybody but with what you're doing here, there's a lot of different other careers to this.

It really starts with you getting your hands dirty, getting in there and figuring out, and then you realize, "Okay, I'm not going to do this for the rest of my life but there's an avenue over here I can take. I can become an inspector, I can become a teacher, I can go work for a manufacturer," because you have the experience you have with that. I always try to gauge it as, "Okay, you're an apprentice. Get through the apprenticeship, focus on it, and then the rest of the doors will open up when you're done. You're able to go through and do what you want to do."

Katherine: Sure. I'm sure that there's people too that would probably, as some people might say, "Oh, gosh. I can't imagine getting up at 5:00 and working outside when it's cold," and other people who look at someone who may be at an office went, "Oh, my gosh. I can't imagine going in from 8:00 to 5:00, sitting at the desk, looking at a computer, and that's it." I can see both sides of it where some people like, "Oh, I need to do something tangible with my hands, and I like to be outside because the fresh air. I don't get to do all those things." I think that there's perspective on both sides.

Jason: Yes, absolutely. Then you had asked what's another characteristic, that's a big one. Somebody that wants a, "Okay, every week, I'm going to have a 40-hour paycheck, I'm going to be in a climate-controlled environment. I'm going to see the same people." That's not what this is. It's going to be different every day and you're going to be asked maybe to do three, four different things in one day, and then you're gone to the next shop. You may have to go to work at night at a hospital to do something at a surgical center and the next day you have to be back during the day. There's not a whole lot of, "I know what my day is going to look like."

Katherine: Exactly. I want to close on a couple last things, and want to talk a little about planting the seed. What are some of the unique ways you and your organization introduce to children, young adults, the plumbing profession? We talked a little bit about boy and girl scouts. Is there anything further you think this is a way that we can continue if we can focus here and continue to grow then we can plant that seed for the trades?

Jason: Yes. I guess there's different ways to look at it, but I come back to the idea of just entertaining new paths. Whenever we do the Boy Scout or Girl Scout thing, I'm not looking at those individuals, most of them are young, 13, 14 that are coming in as, "I expect you to be an apprentice," but I'm introducing them to what is an apprenticeship and this is how it works, and then we talk about what is plumbing, that kind of idea.

They're exposed to different concepts and ideas. I think more of that type of idea is what you're looking at. What the funny thing is, though, because we require a parent to be there or groups of parents to be there, none of them know about apprenticeships either. Almost every single one of them, I'd say 80% to 90% of them

are like, "I had no idea an apprenticeship was even around. Isn't it what they used to do in the old days?" You know what I mean?

Katherine: Yes.

Jason: Touching them now because now they still have guidance to their children. I think it's always good to do stuff with the younger. They may remember it. They didn't have an apprenticeship but if you can get that adult, that parent, to actually engage with that and say, "Really? This is--"

Katherine: An option.

Jason: The school, but then the associated parent organizations, such as that. Because who knows a kid better than the parent?

Katherine: Absolutely.

Jason: They know who's going to work well in a college environment, who really likes to work with his hands, who's always outside, or things of that nature. I think the other thing I would like to start doing more and, I guess, PTAs or so around, things like that, having more of those discussions with the parents to say, "There are other options for your child once they get out of school."

Katherine: I think that's great. Doug, this keeps coming up every conversation. It's the student, it's the parents, and it's the guidance counselors. That is the three-pronged approach where everyone from their different walks of life have come in and said, "We have to be able to talk to all three of those levels to be able to really give options, and talk about the trades, and get the point across that this is an opportunity for people."

Doug: Yes, absolutely. I agree. The more conversation you have with those who are closest to you, the more engaged you're going to want to feel about it. If it's a quick blip across the screen someplace, or you heard a small conversation somewhere, it's like, "Okay, whatever." If it's continuous conversation with those closest to you, I feel that's where the best results come from.

Jason: I would agree with it because most of the people that come into, say, our programs are not always necessarily family members. It's actually a low amount, actually. Usually, it's the old adage, "Don't do what I do. I laid bricks so you didn't have to lay them. Go to college."

Katherine: Sure.

Jason: You still have that sort of mentality, but you're having friends that are-- or an apprentice that's in there and saying, "Hey, let's try this. Let's try that." You're getting more of that kind of referral. I agree, it's definitely something that it has to come from them. You can listen to me or whoever you want, but it's just got to turn out to be those individuals, that right person at the right time saying the right thing, but the awareness was so low out there. Again, I'm not bashing education, but with the thought that everybody had to go to college, they got rid of the shop classes. They got rid of all these things that I was exposed to. It's a digital world. The kids aren't as

File name: Episode 4.mp3

much apt to go outside and fix their bike because the chain broke. You know what I mean?

Katherine: Right.

Doug: Yes.

Jason: Things of that nature is going on and they're getting less and less away from even thinking, "Somebody else does that. That's not even a thing that I can even think about doing," where a lot of us had some of those abilities and experiences.

Katherine: Well, wonderful. Thank you so much for your time today. We greatly appreciate it and looking forward to having more conversations on this subject and about the trades here on *The Fix*.

[music]

Katherine: Thanks for joining us on this episode of *The Fix*. Be sure to follow us on your favorite podcast platform so you don't miss our next conversation dropping every Wednesday. If you have feedback about the show or a topic you'd like to see covered, send us an email at thefix@oatey.com or give us a shout-out on social media. We would love to connect with you. Don't forget. You can get your daily fix by visiting oatey.com, and we'll catch you next time.

[music]

[00:37:05] [END OF AUDIO]