

Wentworth Grad Embarks on New Career

David Kulikowski joined Carpenters Local 67 in 2005 as a first year apprentice. He took advantage of his time in the apprenticeship program rounding out his training as best he could. Shortly into his career as a union carpenter he looked into the Construction Management program at Wentworth.

“I realized it was a daunting task to go to school full time while working full time,” he recalls. However, while working on a project at Brigham and Women’s Hospital, someone overheard him talking about his interest in higher education and told him about a special program that was being drafted by the Carpenters Union and Wentworth Institute of Technology that would give him the opportunity pursue a degree while working full time.

David sought out more information and discovered that the program was tailored for union carpenters and addressed some of the issues that had prevented him from entering the program on his own.

The program enables union carpenters to earn an Associate’s degree in Construction Management from the prestigious school in as little as two years. The program gives members credit for completing a 4-year apprenticeship in Massachusetts and is offered at a significantly reduced tuition rate.

David was the fourth person to enroll in the program when it launched in the fall of 2008. “I wanted to focus on my career. This was the first time I saw myself wanting more for myself. I loved working as a carpenter and working with my hands, but I saw this as the next step to accelerate my career.”

At the time of enrollment, David and his family were dealing with a very tragic situation. In 2007, his daughter, Elizabeth, had been diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor, known as Diffuse Intrinsic Pontine Glioma (DIPG).

“I started the program with the intention to have her cheering me on when I finished,” he says.

Brother Kulikowski competed in the Apprenticeship Contest in 2009, shortly after losing his daughter, Elizabeth to an inoperable brain tumor. He worked under her watchful eye, her picture hanging in his work station. (Photo courtesy of Molly Walsh/NECLMP)



Tragically, his daughter passed away on August 28, 2009. She was only three years old.

“I needed time to grieve,” he recalls “so I took some time off”.

When the Apprenticeship Contest came around just four weeks later, however, he decided to participate. “I wanted to do it to make my daughter proud.”

With her picture hanging in his work station and wearing a pin that read “For my hero, Elizabeth,” David participated in the contest, and shortly after, he returned to his studies at Wentworth and was able to rejoin his Brothers and Sisters that he started the program with.

An important component of this uniquely tailored program is that students start and finish in the same cohort. David recalls that his cohort had formed a tight bond. He credits the support they gave him and his family as being crucial to his return.

“When I came back into the program after Elizabeth passed, I had the help and support of my fellow classmates. Without their help, I think it would have been tough to continue.

It was important to David to graduate with the classmates he started the program with.

“Wentworth worked with me to help me get caught up and make sure I graduated on time with my classmates.”

Along with twenty-eight classmates, David graduated with his Associate’s Degree in September 2010. He then enrolled in the Bachelor’s Degree program, which he is scheduled to graduate from in December 2012.

“After graduating I pounded the pavement with my resume to seek out a job to use the degree,” he says.

David landed a job as an Assistant Project Manager with Integrated Interiors, based out of Boston, MA.

“The skill sets that we bring from the field as carpenters help huge in these positions. Integrated Interiors saw in me the potential to be able to interact with other trades really well. I feel like having field experience played heavy in my favor when I interviewed for this job,” he says.

The transition from working in the field to his current job as an assistant project manager involved “a little bit of culture shock – going from jeans and work boots to business casual attire.” Overall, his work days are now very different from those spent working in the field.

His day consists of reading through Dodge reports, drawings and site specs to see if there is work to bid on. He pulls together information, which is then sent to contractors to put together quotes to bid project. He participates in scheduling meetings, does site visits, and works as part of a team to put together final quotes to submit for bidding. He also answers a lot of emails.

“Working as a team is easier because of skills that I learned as a carpenter working in the field,” he notes.

Despite some very tragic circumstances that could have derailed David’s career pursuits, he certainly has a lot to be proud of.

Wentworth Grads

Ten members of NERCC-affiliated Local Unions were among the honorees at graduation ceremonies held at the Wentworth Institute of Technology. The members received their Associates Degree in Building Construction Management through a program developed and specially tailored for union carpenters a few years ago.

The union carpenter graduates were:

Nathan James Aldrich (Local 33)
 Bryan K. Bartlett (Local 218)
 George F. Daou (Local 107)
 Edward Farrell (Local 67)
 Katie Jenkins (Local 33)
 Daniel Kuja (Local 33)
 William John Lynch (Local 67)
 Michael Morton (Local 40)
 Evan Payne (Local 33)
 James Michael Souther Jr. (Local 40)



Brothers Aldrich, Lynch and Souther graduated "cum laude," an honor bestowed on those graduating with a grade point average between 3.5 and 3.74 on the 4.0 scale. ■

To find out more about the Wentworth Program visit nercc.org and search keyword "Wentworth".

Brother Kulikowski, with his wife Annemarie and their daughter Kaitlyn, holding a photo of Elizabeth at the Apprenticeship Contest in 2009. (Photo courtesy of David Kulikowski)



“I was determined to finish the program to open up more opportunity for me and my family.”

David’s story demonstrates how a carpenter’s determination, combined with flexibility of this uniquely tailored program, makes pursuing higher education and new work opportunities possible for all carpenters.

Currently working on his Bachelor’s Degree, David already has his sights on additional career opportunities and would like to eventually pursue teaching to “give back some of what [he has] received”

“I have a great deal of pride being a union member; it has given me a lot. I hope that I can give something back now.” ■

Brother David Kulikowski currently lives with his wife, Annemarie, and their daughters Kaitlyn and Grace Elizabeth, in Rockland, MA.