



AMSEC LLC Apprentice Profile: Dario Aguilera

Dario Aguilera was a Navy electrician stationed at Little Creek Amphibious Base in Norfolk, Virginia working on small boats when he retired in 2008. "I met several AMSEC employees doing service work on our ships when I was in the Navy," recalls Aguilera. "Roger Adams, one of AMSEC's supervisors, told me that the firm had a small boat shop at Little Creek. Since I had 22 years of experience, I felt my experience would be attractive to the company."



A year after joining AMSEC, Aguilera heard about the company launching a new apprenticeship program. Brad Mason, Director of Operations at AMSEC LLC, championed the program. "The apprenticeship program enables us to grow employees who make meaningful contributions to our work and who have the ability to rise to positions of leadership and responsibility more quickly," explains Mason. "Our program also demonstrates our corporate strengths to the government when we bid on projects. It's a win-win for the company and our workers."

As a member of the first AMSEC apprenticeship class, Aguilera has helped the program coordinator, Ross Leach, learn what works and what doesn't work. Leach explains that each apprentice is aware that their involvement in the program makes them more desirable candidates for promotion. "We want to motivate these employees to grow into leaders. Our hope is that apprentices like Dario will earn their Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree in Maritime Technologies, their journeyman's card, and maybe even another degree. We want to help these individuals advance and become supervisors, project and program managers. We have a low attrition rate for people in supervisory positions, but as our workforce ages, we're going to look to apprentices – people who have taken the effort to complete the program, continue their education, and work above expectation – we're going to hire them to be our next wave of leaders."

After making some initial adjustments to better serve the apprentices and build on academic coursework already completed, Aguilera is now on track to graduate with two industry certificates, and is well on his way to an AAS in Maritime Technologies from Tidewater Community College (TCC). In addition, he will receive an industry-recognized journeyman's card from the State of Virginia which guarantees competitive wages wherever he is employed.

AMSEC LLC Apprentice Profile: Dario Aguilera

“For me going into the apprenticeship program was a no-brainer,” says Aguilera. “My supervisor asked if anyone from our unit wanted to apply and explained that the company would pay for school and give additional benefits like an extra 3% pay increase each year.” While Aguilera acknowledges that participants return to school for different reasons, for him it was the opportunity to refresh his military training and obtain job security.

Aguilera knows the value of his apprenticeship to AMSEC. “If a position opens you have to qualify for it. Being an apprenticeship graduate I know that I’m moving up in the company. There’s no question.”

Now in his third year of the four year program, Aguilera has become a recruiter for the company. “I tell young guys here all the time – guys that come in just sweeping the floor – that they should apply for the program, use what they learned in the Navy, and of course the fact that they’ll get a higher pay rate doesn’t hurt either!”



For more information:

Ross Leach
Apprenticeship Program Manager
AMSEC, LLC
757.226.1152
ross.leach@hii-amsec.com

Barbara Murray
Director and Principal Investigator
SMART Center
757.822.7485
bmurray@tcc.edu