

Career Narrative

Describe how you have prepared yourself to have an awareness of and an understanding about career(s) applicable to the degree or technical certification you wish to pursue. Types of information you may provide include:

- Visits to colleges/universities and conversations with personnel at those institutions.
- Investigations of job/career opportunities and availability.
- Persons/experiences that have influenced you to pursue this degree/certification.
- How you decided between pursuit of an associates degree/technical certification versus baccalaureate or vice-versa.

Hello, My name is "Tinker" and I am here to work on your appliance, speaker system or install the ceiling fan. No, this is not a nightmare, but part of my dream for the future. Asking some people to fix an appliance or to put something back together would be their worst nightmare, but it is just an every day happening for me. "Who put all of this junk in the back of the truck? Tinker must be at it again." This would be the words my parents would repeat numerous times over the years when ready to leave my Granny & Pa's house. While my parents would visit the family, my younger brother and I would scour the fields, barns and warehouses around my grandparents' house/business for anything that looked "interesting." We would load it up to take it home and build something with, weld on it or take it apart. That is how I picked up the nickname "Tinker." My best project idea came when I took empty Freon bottles from my grandfather's heating/air conditioning company and made Halloween Jack-O-Lanterns. I have always loved the challenge of taking things apart and seeing what makes them tick. The challenge is diagnosing the problem, correcting it if possible and then putting the appliance back together, having it work and not having any left over parts and screws. Some of these activities have been very successful and some have been disasters, like the old TV speaker system that finally landed in the trash can. I always loved working with tools and different types of equipment. Even as a little child I loved toys that you could use to build with and things you could take apart and see how it works.

This interest showed itself in my 4-H projects and activities. These activities included repairing lawn mowers, installing ceiling fans, building a coat rack, building a livestock tool equipment stand out of rebar, recycling holiday decorations from empty freon bottles to designing and building the stage design for the Texas 4-H Fashion Show with a working fountain and a variety of lighting options. If it is something to be done with my hands, then it is usually right down my alley.

So, it was natural for me to look at various options in the technical field. I am lucky that I live about 50 miles from one of the best technical schools in the nation---Texas State Technical College, Waco Campus. We visited TSTC, Waco Campus and talked with a variety of different departments including welding, aviation mechanics, turf grass management, heating and air conditioning technology and electrical construction & service. It is really hard to decide what you are going to do for the rest of your life when you are only seventeen years old. This is a scary situation for every high school senior, but luckily I found two departments that really interest me and that can be combined in a double major with just a little more time and classes. I was very impressed with the facilities and the laboratories in the electrical and heating/air conditioning departments. They have a wide variety of equipment to work and train with in these classes. The equipment includes such basic household projects are 220 plugs and switches to industrial wiring to complicated heating and air conditioning equipment. What looks like nightmare to some people, looks like a puzzle to me that I can hardly wait to take apart and explore.

When we visited the campus and departments, we asked lots of questions. One of the most interesting answers was that the TSTC Waco Campus has a 95-100% placement rate for their heating/air conditioning graduates. The job market for electricians and heating/air conditioning personnel is very high. Also, the new law that all electricians have to pass a statewide test by September 2004 is going to make the demand higher. Housing development and growth in Central Texas make an ever expanding market for people with these types of certifications. These two certifications would give me the opportunity to work for a wide variety of companies such as electrical construction companies, home builders, hotels, resorts, colleges/universities, government agencies and hospitals.

People that have influenced my career choice include my late grandfather. He started out as an electrician back in the late 1950's and built his own electrical contracting and air conditioning/heating company. My uncle still manages this business and I have had a lot of up close experience in observing this business on a day-to-day basis.

I believe that for me an Associates Degree with Technical Certifications is the right route. I have had to struggle through many classes due to my dyslexia, but hands-on technical training has always been more natural for me. As a result of my special training and one-on-one tutoring, I have learned how to cope with my learning disabilities. My grades improved in school, and I passed the TAAS test the first time around in the 10th grade. When I achieved this goal, I realized that my goals for further education were not beyond my reach. This is not an easy major, and I know I will face many challenges. TSTC has very small classes and lots of one-on-one attention from the various instructors and teachers. I completed my application to TSTC and mailed it before Christmas. The biggest day of my life was when I received my letter of acceptance to TSTC. Now I have plans to make and goals to set following graduation.

Personal Narrative

Write or type a personal narrative about yourself, highlighting any important facts and information you believe the selection committee should know when considering your application. Do not repeat any information already contained in the application. Use only the space provided on the remainder of this page - do not add pages or use the reverse of this page.

"What do you mean I am going to walk the stage at Texas 4-H Roundup as part of the Texas 4-H Fashion Show? I didn't sew anything for the fashion show. How can I be honored at state? This must be some form of a horrible dream. Someone please wake me up." This is not a nightmare, it is the realization of a lifetime dream—to be recognized as a 1st place winner at Texas 4-H Roundup. This was such a big deal to me, because I am the third generation from my family to walk that stage. I just happen to be one of three Boys that put together the state winning Stage Design for the Texas 4-H Fashion Show in 2003, and we got to decorate the stage at Reed Arena at College Station. It all started with a computer program and an idea. It took a 20-foot cattle trailer to get all our supplies to Roundup and about three hours to get it all in place. The Stage Design even included a working fountain and park lights. Recycling was at the heart of our design and has been at the heart of my conservation in natural resources project. We learned to make park trees from limbs pruned from yards and greenery from dumpsters. Columns and street lamps were not in our budget, so we learned to improvise. After the fashion show, we took all our decorations down and carefully packed them back in the trailer. On Friday following Roundup, the decorations were used to decorate for a wedding reception. We have become experts at unloading, decorating a reception hall or other public facility and then taking it down and packing it up again. We have done this several times this summer and fall. Who knows, this may be the start of a whole new business.

Stage design does not sound like a typical 4-H activity. This is just one example of some of the many different activities and opportunities youth can have in 4-H. When I first joined 4-H, nine years ago, all I ever wanted to do was show animals at the local stock show. I soon learned that there was a lot more to being involved in 4-H. I have had an extensive 4-H career that has covered a wide variety of projects and experiences. One of my first project activities was learning about insects. I really enjoyed collecting and identifying the insects. This was the start of my Conservation of Natural Resources Project. To this day, my mother has to be careful when she opens a container in the freezer, because often it contains some of my insects. I also learned that there is no place any hotter than a Central Texas cotton field in July. One summer, I worked with a Texas A&M graduate student collecting cotton insects for a research project. I decided that this was certainly not something I want to do for the rest of my life. My conservation of natural resources project has really expanded into raising catfish and hybrid bass. I soon learned about the importance of daily feeding, cleaning the stinky tanks and making sure the chlorine and salt are at the proper levels to prevent "lck." I also learned how important it is to make sure that all the filtration and air supply hoses are all connected properly. We found this out the hard way when we had a "very fishy" smell. Instead of harvesting fish weighing 2-4 pounds and having a great fish fry for family and friends, we harvested less than 35 pounds of fish. I learned to take lemons and make them into lemonade with this accident. It is a lesson I will never forget and you can bet I double and triple check all those connections.

Making Jack-O-Lanterns that will not rot from empty Freon Bottles as well as Christmas Luminaries was a fun project. This past year, I worked with a group of youth and taught them how to make these decorations and we made 50 of these Luminaries and sold them for a profit of \$1100. for a local organization. This was a good way to use something that was just taking up space.

4-H projects and activities have taught me a great many different lessons and I have learned from both my successes and from my failures. Raising animals for show takes a lot of time, commitment, responsibility and patience. My animals are fed every morning around 6:00 A.M., come rain or shine. They have to be fed in the afternoon, be groomed and exercised and have their stalls and pens cleaned, and their special feed ration must be up made up twice daily. I have really learned to manage my time. Consistency and accurate feeding are very important.

One of the major lessons I have learned as the result of my 4-H experiences is not be afraid to try new experiences and opportunities. One year, I was the only boy who entered the

construction category of the county fashion show. I won my category and gained lots of self-confidence. Everyone needs to learn to sew so they can thread a needle and sew on a button or fix a rip in time of need. I have learned about the fun of comparison shopping in my consumer decision project.

I have had the wonderful opportunity to participate in many different activities such as Texas 4-H Congress. Learning how to write a legislative bill and then stand up and speak for or against different bills was quite a learning opportunity. I have learned how much work is involved in planning and putting on some of these many different events together. Serving as an officer is a great honor, but it is what you do with this honor. Working together as a team toward one common goal for the enrichment of everyone is one of the most important lessons that I have learned through my years in 4-H. Decorating the Scott & White Pediatric Clinic for the holidays was an outstanding experience. There are two very important lessons I have learned in 4-H--"I may not always win, but 4-H is fun" and "You never really learn something until you teach it to someone else." Thank you for considering me for the Texas 4-H Foundation Scholarship Program