



After graduating from the program and spending three years in the laboratory, Grooms wrote the job description, interviewed and hired Lipscomb. Above and right, Grooms keeps a watchful eye as Lipscomb puts his newfound knowledge to work. Bottom right, Grooms proves that learning is a continual process. He is shown here working on a crown—a new endeavor for him.



track for graduation, have no absentee, tardiness or discipline problems, and have at least two units of credit, or be enrolled, in a course corresponding with their career interest.

In addition to gaining career insight and experience, students are also paid for their work. According to Westmoreland, employers pay the workers at least minimum wage, and many earn more than that. "We try to encourage the employers to pay better than minimum wage since the students are career minded," she said. Each student is required to work at least 15 hours a week on the job, and some work more. "We say that the average student should work 20 to 25 hours a week, but we have some students who are far enough along in their classwork that they can work up to 35 hours a week," Westmoreland said. Some students leave the school for their jobs after one period, some after three periods. "One of the other advantages of this program is the flexibility. Some students go to work in the mornings, and some work in the afternoons. It really helps," she said.

When a job is issued to a participant in the program, each student is given a training plan. This identifies different responsibilities and tasks that must be completed by the student. The plan is put together by Westmoreland and the individual employer. "It documents what they do on the job," Westmoreland said. "We work with the employer to identify what skills a student should learn, and to what degree."

According to Marshall, the economy in White County is "booming. Unemployment is way down. Anyone who wants to work can work," he said. This is one of the reasons the apprenticeship program is so successful.

Georgia State Senator Guy Middleton agrees. Middleton has been a staunch supporter of the program since its inception. In fact, he helped write the grant that got the funding for the second year of the program. "With the apprenticeship program, the emphasis is on employer involvement," he said. "It tickles me to death to see this going on in White County. I want to see this program go statewide. Seventy-two percent of high school students in this state don't go to college. Programs like this can do a lot to help train our young people for the future."

According to Thomas, the reason he is such a proponent of the program is because "someone took the time to care about me when I was young," he said. "There was a man who gave me my shot when I was growing up—and getting into trouble. He watched me grow up with his children, and after I got out of the military, he gave me the opportunity to learn the industry. He gave me this opportunity when most people wouldn't. ...And he is the reason that I believe in giving these kids an environment in which to prosper. Cal Dauphinee gave me my shot, and I'm giving these kids theirs." **JDT**