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## HUNTSVILLE'S JOSH ADKINS SIGNS ON AS EAST TENNESSEE'S FIRST WASTEWATER APPRENTICE



L-R: Bill Walker, director, ETHRA Workforce Development Services; Josh Adkins; Town of Huntsville Mayor Dennis Jeffers; Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development State Apprentice Director Tyra Copas; Tennessee Association of Utility Districts Workforce Development Coordinator Kevin Byrd

On Thursday, January 7, 2021 Josh Adkins of Huntsville, the Town of Huntsville and Tennessee Association of Utility Districts (TAUD) formally signed an employer agreement that will place Adkins in a two year wastewater operations specialist apprentice program, making Huntsville the first utility system in East Tennessee, and only the second community in the state to sponsor this unique program.

The program, the first of its kind in Tennessee, and only the 29th in the United States is administered through a city utility district by TAUD and the National Rural Water Association. The goal of the apprenticeship is designed to address the need for certified water and wastewater facility operators in rural Tennessee communities, and strives to bring awareness of career opportunities in the water and wastewater industry. "These are good jobs, that pay well, have great benefits, and, once certified, a water/wastewater specialist can practically go anywhere in the U.S. to work. There is a great demand right now for water specialists," Kevin Byrd, TAUD Workforce Development Coordinator told the Scott County News. Byrd added,"Josh Adkins will have a National Journeyman's certification as a water and wastewater specialist after he completes this program. This is a new initiative, under the umbrella of National Rural Water Operations, and the apprenticeship serves a real need, gets a person some excellent experience with on the job training and it pays well."

Josh Adkins is from Scott County, has already been working for the Town of Huntsville since August, and previously worked at Roane State in Huntsville as a success coach.

Huntsville Mayor Dennis Jeffers told the Scott County News,"This is a win-win. The apprenticeship will help Josh in his career, and he can help the Town of Huntsville with his great work ethic and attitude. When Josh completes the program, he will have several utility certifications and experience that will make him a tremendous asset to the Town of Huntsville, and ensure the integrity of Huntsville's wastewater facility. Actually, since he's been working here under the mentorship of Danny Phillips, our Wastewater Supervisor for the past 30 years. Josh has already been an asset to the Town of Huntsville. I'm pleased to be signing this agreement with Josh today."

Byrd stated that also when Adkins completes the program, he will have over 4,000 hours of on the job training, plus over 300 hours of coursework.

Danny Phillips said,"I'll be serving as a mentor for Josh during the next two years. I've been certified for 30 years, and was named Operator of the State in 2012. I have no doubt that Josh will be very successful. This is a great opportunity."

Also present at the signing ceremony, Tyra Copas, Tennessee Workforce Development Department State Apprenticeship Director, told the Scott County News,"We're very excited for Josh. While TAUD is the administrator of the apprenticeship program, the Tennessee Department of Labor oversees the program, and helps as an intermediary."

Bill Walker, director of Workforce Development Services through East Tennessee Human Resource Agency (ETHRA) added, "We are very happy to be here today and look forward to seeing this apprenticeship program grow and fulfill a need. It's ideal for small rural communities. We're glad to see the Town of Huntsville participating in this program, and look forward to its continuing success."

## **Oneida's Newest Restaurant Now Open**





The Barn, located at 3355 Coopertown Road, promises to be a great place to stop in for breakfast, lunch or dinner. The Barn is located next to New Haven Baptist Church, and is owner/operated by Mike Terry and Ronald Thompson. Pictured are: Mike Terry, Binessa Terry, Ronald Thompson, Debbie Sexton and Journey Owens. Terry said the Barn opened on Monday, January 4, and the response from the community was overwhelming. "We served over 200 eggs at breakfast," he said. The Barn's breakfast is from 6 a.m.-10 a.m. Monday through Saturday, and is open until 7 p.m. Monday through Saturday. The Barn begins serving on Sundays at 8 a.m., and closes at 6 p.m. "Our goal is to serve good food at reasonable prices. Our breakfast starts at \$3.25 Please come out and see us soon!" said Terry.

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