

This story is the third in a series about the contributions of the support staff at the TCTC. The success of our school is a by-product of the efforts of our diverse workforce. Administrators, teachers, custodians, secretaries, cooks and para-professionals work together to create a great environment for our students. This is a story about one person who is making a difference.



Pete Pappas: Jack of All Trades

Whoever coined the phrase handyman, had to be thinking of a person like Pete Pappas. His job title at the TCTC is custodian/maintenance, but his talents are far more encompassing. Pete Pappas can fix anything. During his 11 years at the TCTC, he has demonstrated proficiency in a wide variety of tasks.

Pappas attributes his mechanical skills to his interest in drag racing as a teenager. “My friends and I liked to race cars, but we did not have the money to pay for parts and repairs. In those circumstances, experience is your best teacher. You learn to become a do it yourself person. If I didn’t know something I asked someone who did, but I paid close attention so because I did not want to become a nuisance. From that time forward, I have been comfortable with tools.”

Pappas has a strong work ethic that he attributes to his parents. “I am a product of an Italian family that placed emphasis on accountability. I attended parochial schools in my youth where there was a strong focus on discipline. I learned from an early age from my father that if you wanted things in life, hard work was the only way to obtain them. He did not believe in taking shortcuts and he instilled the same philosophy in his children.”

After graduation from high school, Pappas cannot remember a time when he did not hold a job. I worked in a restaurant as a cook, was employed at a processing plant where I rose to the rank of assistant foreman. I have also driven truck.”

While driving truck, Pappas noticed workers installing windows and doors in a housing project. He knew that he had the skills required for this endeavor and believed that he also had the managerial acumen to oversee projects of this nature. At this point, he made the decision to trust his entrepreneurial instincts. He invested his savings to launch the P.E Pappas Enterprises. For the next 16 years, he made an excellent living installing windows and doors in housing projects. He supervised work crews consisting of 10 employees and traveled widely across the eastern part of the United States. The job contained perks such as working the winter months in Key West, Florida, but the drawback was the extensive time that he spent away from his family.

When the TCTC was searching for a maintenance person in 1999, Pappas selected family over fortune. “I have two daughters and I did not want to miss seeing them grow up.” He has not regretted the decision. “The TCTC is a great place to work because the staff puts the students first in everything they do. The kids see that the adults care about them and I think it makes a difference in their attitude.”

At the TCTC, Pappas is responsible for maintaining the building and facilities. He also services transportation vehicles and fixes the equipment that needs repaired. Jerry Gorgie, the Supervisor of Building and Grounds provides Pappas with a thumbs up evaluation. “Pete is a great addition to the support staff. He is competent at a wide variety of tasks and takes ownership for the successful completion of an endeavor. I trust his judgment because he brings a broad knowledge of real world experience to the TCTC.”

Jason Gray, Director of the TCTC, says that the staff and administration appreciate Pappas. “Pete gets things done correctly in a timely manner. You never have to request a second time and you can always count on the quality of his work. He is friendly and personable to everyone. He is not the type of person to say, “That’s not my job.”

Larry Crawford, Academic Supervisor said his relationship with Pappas is proof that opposites attract. He said, “I can’t fix anything, and Pete can repair about everything, but we enjoy each other’s company. He respects the work that I do and I have a similar regard for him. Whoever hired Pete at the TCTC knew what they were doing.”

The onslaught of technology has created a niche market for specialists. It is difficult to find one person who can repair the car, fix the furnace, or remodel the house. Pete Pappas is a throwback to the artisans of yesteryear. He is the carpenter who toiled his hands in wood, he is also the miller with the mill wheels grinding, and the tinker carrying the pots he made. When you add up his contributions to the TCTC, they are greater than the sum of the parts. Therefore, he is more than a jack-of-all-trades. He is the master of most.