

Forging a Future in Sheet Metal: An Apprentices' Apprenticeship Journey  
Kasey Lorance, Sheet Metal Apprentice - Superior Duct Fabrication

In Ventura, CA, Kasey Lorance has found her calling in an unexpected place - the sheet metal industry. After multiple attempts at college, Kasey discovered a path that aligned with her hands-on learning style through an apprenticeship program at Superior Duct Fabrication.

"About five years ago, I had ended up dropping out of college for like the third time," Kasey recalls. "I just couldn't find anything that like held my interest or that I was really motivated to do." With some welding experience from high school and college classes, Kasey was considering getting certified as a welder when her uncle, an instructor in the program, encouraged her to apply for the union apprenticeship program.

The appeal was clear: "Free education, full-time job, and they'll certify you for free," Kasey explains. This combination of practical skills, immediate employment, and professional certification proved to be the perfect fit for her learning style.

The apprenticeship program, typically five years long, was condensed to four and a half years for Kasey due to her prior experience. The structure of the program, combining classroom instruction with on-the-job training, resonated with her. "This style of learning, where it's a lot more in-class, hands-on, you're directly using the things that you are learning in class in your day-to-day work and seeing how it impacts and why it is useful... it just held my attention better," she says.

Classroom experiences took place at the union hall two nights a week, covering a range of topics from basic metal joinery and welding to more advanced subjects like layout and detailing. Kasey found these classes, particularly layout, to be among her favorites.

On the job, Kasey's days are filled with hands-on work in the Round department at Superior Duct Fabrication. Her responsibilities include delegating tasks, ensuring jobs are completed on time, and overseeing various aspects of the fabrication process.

While Kasey didn't have a formal mentor, she found support from various individuals both on the job and in the apprenticeship program. "My first foreman here would always take the time to kind of break down how things were done and was very easy to come to whenever there was some kind of issue that I didn't know how to work through on my own," she shares.

For Kasey, the driving force behind committing to a multi-year apprenticeship was the desire for a stable, fulfilling career. "I was really looking for a career. I was tired of just having jobs that I wasn't very passionate about, that I was barely making ends meet doing something that I didn't want to do anyways," she explains. The apprenticeship offered not just a job, but a pathway to long-term career growth and stability.

The union's role in Kasey's apprenticeship experience was integral, providing job opportunities and encouraging involvement in union activities. "The Union Hall just makes sure that we keep working. You know, they make sure that we have those jobs," Kasey notes. She also appreciates



the union's efforts to involve apprentices in broader industry issues, such as attending school board meetings for project labor agreements.

Reflecting on her journey, Kasey offers valuable advice for those considering an apprenticeship: "Don't be afraid of not knowing something. That's kind of what the whole point of being an apprentice is, is to learn and to ask questions." She emphasizes the importance of embracing the learning process and not letting the initial lack of skills deter potential apprentices.

Kasey's story illustrates the transformative power of apprenticeship programs, particularly for those who thrive in hands-on learning environments. From a young adult determined to seek her true calling to a skilled sheet metal worker running her own department, Kasey's journey demonstrates how apprenticeships can provide a path to a rewarding career and personal growth.

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