

ENERGY EFFICIENCY: A CAREER FOR TODAY'S SHEET METAL WORKER



Michael Savage is carrying on a family tradition. Born and raised in Cleveland, he's a third-generation sheet metal worker, and though proud of his heritage he recognizes that today's job opportunities are different than those of his predecessors. "The world is changing right now," he says. "Buildings need to be more efficient."



"Now I have a job where we're all in this together, helping the economy to grow."

—MIKE SAVAGE
SHEET METAL APPRENTICE
(PICTURED WITH SON DYLAN AND WIFE KATI)

SAVAGE WORKS IN ARCHITECTURAL SHEET METAL, PRIMARILY WATERPROOFING BUILDING ENVELOPES –

the physical separator between the interior and exterior of a building. Using metal roofs, he says, protects structures "better for longer and increases waterproofing efficiency and lifespan." A good roof that keeps water out also keeps heat and air conditioning inside, which saves energy and money.

Savage is currently working on the Cleveland Clinic Health Education Center, where skylights open into an atrium and require layers of waterproofing to ensure the roof will be protected.

He explored different career paths early on, before pursuing sheet metal work; he worked odd jobs during college, then joined the army and did stints in South Korea, Iraq and Afghanistan. He married his high-school sweetheart

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“A future that I can feel good about,”

is how sheet metal apprentice Mike Savage describes his union job, as a member of the Sheet Metal, Air, Rail & Transportation Workers Local 33 (SMART) union.



while in the service, and when he got out, the high-wage jobs in the oil fields of Oklahoma, Texas and Wyoming beckoned. However, it didn't take long before he grew weary of long periods away from his wife and wanted to start a family.

That's when Savage learned about the Helmets to Hard Hats program, which connects former military personnel with quality career training and employment opportunities within the construction industry. Now a first-year apprentice at Industrial First, a diversified specialty construction service organization, and a proud member of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail & Transportation Workers Local 33 (SMART) union, he enjoys the comradery of his colleagues, a well-paying job, and “a future that I can feel good about.”

The Savage family has taken a smart energy approach to their home as well. “We installed new energy-efficient windows, switched to LED light bulbs, and purchased high efficiency appliances,” he says. “We're definitely saving money; our monthly bills are a lot lower.”

The expanding field of energy efficiency has changed Savage's life for the better. With a one-year old son, and a daughter on the way, he sees growth opportunities ahead, and has ambitions to become superintendent someday. “In the oil fields, everyone was out for themselves. Now I have a job where we're all in this together, helping the economy grow.”

Savage's experience reflects a trend toward increased jobs in Ohio's energy efficiency sector, where more than 81,000 workers are employed. That's good news for projects that save energy like the Cleveland Clinic—and good for growing families, like his.

Artist rendering of Cleveland Clinic Health Education Center, where Savage works on energy efficiency

