

PROFILE OF A MAT² PARENT: JEANINE COMBS



A few months before her son Matt's high school graduation in 2013, Jeanine Combs attended a presentation from the new Michigan Advanced Technician Training Program (MAT²) that had a lasting impact on her family.

Jeanine learned that the MAT² program, which is supported by local manufacturing and IT employers and the State of Michigan, was a path to gain hands-on skills, work experience, and a debt-free associate degree. Apprentices in the MAT² program receive paid on-the-job training, as well as tuition, books, and fees to complete a two-year degree.

"I always wanted Matt to go to college, but I knew academics were never his strong suit," said Jeanine in an MLive.com article. "He was always good with his hands, and he played some sports, so I knew for years that he was better at engaging with others when he was part of a team. So when I heard about MAT², I thought it would be a perfect fit for him. And it really has been."

Through the MAT² program, Matt earned a degree in mechatronics – a field that combines electrical and

mechanical technologies – from Oakland Community College, paid for by his employer, EMAG, a German-based manufacturer with a location in Farmington Hills. He now travels throughout the Midwest with his job at EMAG, using his expertise to set up equipment in manufacturing facilities.

"EMAG covered the cost of his tuition, his books, and paid him a small stipend while he trained, so he graduated debt-free and with enough money to move into his own apartment close to work."

"Our older son graduated in 2013 from U of M as a software engineer, and he's got a fine career, but also a lot of tuition debt. They're both happy, which is what's really important, but Matt's financial freedom may make things a little easier for him in the long run."

Jeanine credits the MAT² program with helping Matt make the most of his natural gifts. He is thriving in a high-growth career, and Jeanine wants other parents to know that their children could have similar success with MAT².

"I wish there was a way to tell parents of elementary school kids about this program," she said. "If you watch your child closely, you can already see by an early age what kind of things they're interested in. If they like working with their hands, and are bored by traditional classroom learning, that doesn't mean there's anything wrong with them. You may want to keep MAT² in mind."

Interested in a MAT² Apprenticeship? Contact us at info@mat2apprenticeships.com