

Spotlight on IBEW 570 Apprenticeship: Helping working families build skills, find jobs

Francisco Campista is an artist who has changed mediums, switching from ink and paint to wire and cable.

Campista, an apprentice with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local Union 570, graduated from the University of Arizona with an art degree in 2005 and began building a career as a painter and illustrator.

Then the Great Recession crushed the Tucson economy, making Campista's work an unaffordable luxury for most people.

"The recession made it really hard for me to survive as an artist," says Campista.



Francisco Campista works as an apprentice with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local Union 570.

And in 2008, there was another mouth to feed. "My son was born and I was struggling as a sign maker," says Campista.

Getting into the IBEW apprenticeship program provided a new opportunity – learning while earning.

"Trying to make it as an artist is tough," Campista says. "You can't clock in, work for eight and get paid for eight. You may work 16 hours on something with no guarantee of getting paid."

"Now, I own a home. I have kids and they have what they need."

But, Campista says, there are similarities between his old line of work and his work as an apprentice. The vacant lot of a job site "is like a blank canvas." Every wiring project is like a work of art, the result of careful craftsmanship and intense attention to detail.

Discovering a new trade

The arc welder Israel Gomez used in a fabrication shop in Yuma harnessed the power of electricity.

“I was fascinated by electricity,” says Gomez, an apprentice with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local Union 570.

He did some research into the IBEW and moved to Tucson with his wife to enter the Local 570 apprenticeship program.

“The biggest thing for me was being able to learn and work at the same time,” says Gomez. “With the IBEW apprenticeship, you’re earning as you’re learning.”

The apprenticeship’s mix of classroom instruction and on-the-job experience makes learning new skills easier, he says.

While fascinated by the power of electricity, Gomez appreciates the focus on safety, both in the classroom lessons and the hands-on work in the field.

“Safety is a huge focus with IBEW,” he says.

The apprenticeship – and the career path of an IBEW journeyman – provides security, stability and the chance for ongoing training, Gomez says.

More information: www.ibew570.org



Israel Gomez says he's fascinated by the power of electricity. Gomez is an apprentice with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local Union 570.