

By Adam Crozier

Imagine possessing a true passion and learning skills on a regular basis and then turning that desire into a substantive career. Junior **Kyle Smith** works hard to make that dream a reality at Central Nine.



Kyle Smith

The living history of C9 predates that of Perry Meridian and Smith. However, when it opened, the career center served nine school districts: Perry, Franklin Central, Beech Grove, Greenwood, Whiteland, Center Grove, Franklin Community, Indian Creek and Edinburg. Once Edinburg dropped, deciding to send Lancers to a Columbus career center instead, the name was established to represent the nine schools that feed into it.

Master Teacher Tom Jacobs learned printing, now called visual communications, from 1978 through 1980 while he attended C9 in high school. "I learned a lot about responsibility, work ethic, being part of a team," he said. "But my favorite thing was meeting other people from other schools. I made a lot of friends." He's also a fanboy. Within his office sits a shelf decorated with Captain America and Ironman action figures and other paraphernalia.

An Indian Creek Brave and C9 student, Jacobs also studied printing at Vincennes University. In the workforce he did machine operation, maintenance and repair. He started teaching at C9 in 1987 and stuck with it since. "We are an extension of the high schools," he said. "It's like students take another class at their high school, but travel here to take it."

Even though he attends C9, Smith feels like a part of Perry Meridian.

"I don't think of it any differently. I don't think I'm any less of a Falcon. One thing that's cool about being a Falcon is you have a lot of opportunities to get involved with whatever you want. You can get into theater, you can get into **FOCUS**, you can get into FTV."

Smith knows how to build a computer from scratch and keeps updated on the latest PC hardware. He can install and fix corrupt Windows operating systems. Smith also dabbles in photo and video editing. His time at C9 offered

C9 teachers, students utilize trade skills to achieve success



Perry sophomore Conner Rojas eats a bowl of chili he made for the C9 Open House. The culinary education program began the year making tortilla chips with salsa, bread sticks and fries. Now, during breaks at C9, they sell burgers, kebabs and chicken; the menu gets more complicated as their skill level increases. Rojas said his father is a chef who is opening up a new restaurant (Photo by Adam Crozier).

him the environment to foster his technical skills in these areas, something he'd like to do for the rest of his life.

"I think what gives me the edge is not only am I willing to learn more, I self teach a lot by going on the Internet," Smith said. "I am really willing to learn more about technology as it evolves."

Under the guidance of engineer Jeff Mullikin in the electronics and computer networking program, Smith received certification and won a regional competition in electronics know-how. He also takes on big projects to help his C9 classmates.

"Two days out of the week Kyle does virtual machines," Mullikin said. "They bring up another computer to reload the software."

Smith described it like a "sandbox" where students at C9 test real-world scenarios and troubleshoot.

"Mullikin's a really awesome teacher; if you get along with him, he can help you. He has a lot of contacts with people high up in business because he knows people in ESPA--Electronic Systems Professional Alliance."



**Master Teacher
Tom Jacobs**



**Engineer
Jeff Mullikin**

If students break something, or corrupt the computer, Smith can reload or redownload his Windows clone. "A virtual machine is useful for when you want to do whatever you want to without messing anything else up," he said. Smith also interns in C9's IT department Thursday and Friday. "Without the internship I wouldn't be able to do what I'm doing now," he said.

Student teacher Michael Duncan works in the IT department. He graduated from the career center three years ago. "Kyle's great," Duncan said. "He probably knows more than me and I get paid."

Smith hopes to find a job in computer technology right out of high school. On the side, his plans are to keep earning training certificates in the computer field.



Franklin Central junior Steven Gerth shows Perry sophomore Aiden Bedwell Visual Basic programming in a C9 computer lab. Bedwell and his parents attended a C9 Open House after he committed to the program. He's interested in learning more about computer programming through C9 classes at the beginning of school next year. (Photo by Adam Crozier).