

# HVAC Student Moves Forward After Job Loss Through Career Education in Margate

MIAMI, FL, UNITED STATES, February 9, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- This week, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis commemorated February as Career and Technical Education [\(CTE\) Month](#), observed to recognize the accomplishments of students and educators and highlight the collaboration among local leaders, businesses and industry partners that contribute to the success of CTE programs across the state.

Margate, Florida resident Charles Benefield is a good example of how CTE can lead to a brighter future for those who are not inclined to pursue a traditional 4-year degree.

As an elementary school student, Benfield was a kid who fell through the cracks. He attended three different schools, each of which placed him in Special Learning Disability (SLD) classes due to his short-term attention span and his need for additional tutoring.

Yet, the SLD classes were never able to provide him with the help he needed.

"On paper, I guess that's what the special class was going to be for – giving me a little more time and attention," said Benfield, now 41. "But, the litmus test to be put into that class was the amount of time it took you to do your work. It seemed that made it just a dumping ground for troubled kids."

In other words, SLD teachers spent most of their time dealing with the most disruptive kids, all at the expense of the quieter students. This left Benfield and others with even less opportunity to learn, and many of them became the targets of classroom bullies.

He tried homeschooling for a while, but that didn't work out, either. His mom worked during the day and, therefore, couldn't oversee his school lessons. So, he headed back to the classroom in middle school, where his experience was a familiar one.

"I was saddled with the same thing, and I just lost my motivation for school," Benfield said. "I remember getting a bad sinus infection and missing a few days, and I just never went back."

This decision would haunt him for the next two-plus decades. As needs and responsibilities grew throughout his life – things like managing depression and helping support his brother, who has Asperger syndrome – Benfield's need for a high school diploma and long-term career training

also continued to grow.

After losing a job that he thought might be his long-term answer, Benfield eventually found [Florida Career College \(FCC\)](#) in Margate. He enrolled in the Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) program.

Also, in November of last year, Benfield earned his high school diploma available through a program offered by FCC.

“That’s something that was a big obstacle for me,” he said. “I wanted to do several different things throughout the years, but that high school diploma was a big obstacle. The fact that FCC provided the ability to get that. I wanted to be able to do something to have a future, and I feel like that’s what I got at FCC.”

Benfield said he spent most of his life working various jobs in retail – jobs that never paid well and rarely offered any significant benefits. Then a few years ago, he found a position working at a storage facility that he felt might support him over the long term.

“To me, that was going to be the thing,” he said. “I started feeling a little more secure.”

But, the job didn’t last. When he was let go, he felt he was back to square one. For a couple of years, Benfield dabbled in food deliveries which was fine for a while, but he knew that wasn’t sustainable.

He needed something more stable. That’s when he came across Florida Career College through an online search.

“I ended up physically going into campus over a year ago now mainly as a recon mission,” Benfield said. “I was just going in to seek information or what not – to see what the options were. I would have been happy with just getting my GED, but I learned that here, I would also get training and be able to have a career.”

Benfield chose to enroll in the [HVAC program](#) because, as he said “I like working with my hands, figuring things out, and the puzzle process, if you will, of figuring things out in a system. I like that sort of investigative work in just figuring out a problem.”

Once he started classes, Benfield said he sensed a completely different approach to education than what he experienced in the past.

“I would definitely say that the instructor I have now, Mr. Naylor, if I had him as a teacher back in school, I probably would have actually gone to high school and finished it,” he said. “He’s really good with the hands-on stuff, he’s very understanding, he sees when you’re having trouble, and he’ll take time to go over things with you, which I really appreciate.”

“When you walk through my classroom doors, it doesn’t matter where you’re from, your financial

status or your educational background, I am going to teach every student that is willing to learn and get their hands dirty,” HVAC instructor Alex Naylor said. “Charles is very willing and persistent in learning as much as he can. He almost never missed class and was more consistent with his work online than most students in the class. Teaching dedicated students like Charles makes my job fun and fulfilling.”

Benfield graduated in January and was quickly hired as an HVAC technician at AA Advance Air. He said that taking courses at FCC has instilled in him a greater level of confidence both in his education and his career prospects, especially when looking back at all he’s accomplished in a relatively short time.

“I’m my own worst critic when it comes to my progression, but when I take a step back and look at it, yes, I’m definitely proud,” Benfield said.

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