



BUILDING 21ST CENTURY GREEN BUILDERS

by George Kopf, GETS Training & Employment Manager

Danny Simms is an 18 year-old Richmond native with a wiry frame and a quick smile. He currently works on the [Rising Sun Energy Services](#) crew performing energy audits and efficiency upgrades on homes in Berkeley and Richmond. Since joining the Rising Sun Energy Services team in April 2011, Danny has steadily grown in his technical knowledge of Whole Home Performance testing and retrofitting while also learning what it means to be a professional in his field. As a GETS student, Danny proved himself to be fast learner. As a Rising Sun Energy Services employee, Danny has shown he can be a team player and leader.



In the spring of 2009, Danny enrolled in the [City of Richmond's YouthBUILD](#) pre-apprenticeship training program, where he learned the basics of carpentry and electrical installation, as well as construction safety. While learning vocational skills, Danny was also working on his GED, which he completed in early 2010.

In March of 2011, Danny participated in the ["Green Energy Training Services" \(GETS\) program](#), a 3-week Building Performance introduction class taught by [Rising Sun Energy Center](#) through its partnership with the City of Richmond's [RichmondBUILD Green Career Academy](#).

Danny describes his GETS training by saying, "GETS was real interesting and there was definitely a lot to learn. I wanted to go into the green industry and I thought maybe GETS could be that door in. My favorite parts of the training were when we got to go into the crawlspace and set up the Blower Door." In addition to the technical and theoretical training Danny received, he also got an opportunity to learn what it means to work on a team. Danny remains in contact with several of his GETS classmates.

In April 2011, Danny was given an opportunity to continue his residential energy efficiency training as a Crew Member with Rising Sun Energy Services, our own Building Performance social enterprise. Rising Sun Energy Services provides "on-the-job" training for GETS graduates by offering living wage jobs performing Whole Home Performance testing and energy efficiency upgrades to San Francisco Bay area homes.

Ten months since joining the Rising Sun Energy Services team, Danny is going strong. He describes the work as "very enjoyable, and there's a good atmosphere with all the crew members." As a self-described "crawlspace and attic pro," Danny describes the work with a smile and says, "When you're working, time goes by real fast...I am super comfortable in crawlspaces and attics and I like working in them because I am good at it."



THE 2012 RISING SUN ENERGY SERVICES CREW

One particular Richmond home provided a unique challenge for Danny. “This one home had a super duper small crawlspace – it was so tight, I couldn’t even roll over. We thought installing the vapor barrier was going to take all week but we got it done in 3 days. It was one of the hardest projects we’ve done but we completed it ahead of schedule.” Danny’s sense of accomplishment and pride is palpable as he says, “that space was so tight, no one else on the crew could do it but me.”

Danny’s next goal is to get his [BPI](#) Building Analyst certification through Rising Sun’s Advanced GETS class. Offered evenings and weekends, this training is designed for working professionals like Danny.

“After I get my BPI Building Analyst, I want a permanent full-time position doing attic and crawlspace work like what I am already doing. Maybe some day I can be a crew lead.”

When asked where he sees himself in 5 years, he says, “Owning my own home in Hayward and commuting to San Francisco, and staying connected to Rising Sun Energy Center.”

Danny doesn’t see himself as a pioneer but, in many regards, he is. As one of the first in a generation of inner-city youth learning the principles of Whole Home Building Performance, Danny is well on his way to becoming a 21st Century builder who has known nothing but green building practices.

When I ask if he has advice to other young men and women thinking about a career in energy efficiency he says, “You have got to be sure you want to do this because it’s not the easiest



RISING SUN ENERGY CENTER

1900 Addison Street, Suite 100, Berkeley, CA 94704

Phone: 510.665.1501

Fax: 510.665.1502

www.risingsunenergy.org

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kind of work, either physically or mentally. And when you start, you got to be on your good foot – you know, give your best effort.”

Danny is clearly putting forth his best effort and has a great start to a promising career.



George Kopf is the GETS Training & Employment Manager at Rising Sun Energy Center. If you are interested in hiring Danny or any of our other program graduates, contact George at Kopf at [kopf \(at\) risingsunenergy.org](mailto:kopf@risingsunenergy.org).