

## CTE success stories: Hooked on fixing cars

### Kadeem Carter, auto body collision repair

By Michaela Ward on Aug 17 2015

 [kadeem\\_carter\\_2-courtesy.jpg](#)

Photo: Courtesy of Kadeem Carter

*The Philadelphia School District's career and technical education (CTE) programs give students an opportunity to choose a career path that best matches their interests and talents, while gaining hands-on training in high school. Many students who have participated in one of the District's 41 CTE programs have transitioned to post-secondary institutions – college, university, or technical school -- and some have also gotten jobs in their chosen fields right out of high school.*

*The Notebook asked several graduates from a District CTE program how their participation shaped their interests and lives. We interviewed students from a variety of programs, from culinary arts to computer systems networking to auto body collision repair.*

*Several profiles will appear in our upcoming Fall Guide to High Schools, due out Sept. 4, and over the next few weeks, we will preview some of these students' stories online.*

*Our third profile is of Kadeem Carter, a 2013 graduate of Randolph's Auto Body Collision Repair program.*

---

Kadeem Carter knew by the time he was in 7th grade that he wanted his career to involve cars. Carter's father, who grew up in Germantown and had heard about CTE automotive programs, told his son that he could actually study automotive repair in high school.

"I was really into cars. ... When I found out I could go to school for it, I was hooked right there," he said.

In 10th grade, Carter began taking classes in the Auto Body Collision Repair program at Randolph Career Academy. The summer after he took his first auto-collision class, Carter was able to get a job working in a shop. But he spent time in the shop even before he started his summer job.

"I went there every day after school to just watch them work."

Carter, a 2013 graduate of Randolph, has begun to build a career in auto repair with the skills he developed in the CTE program. He's also taking classes at the Pennsylvania College of Technology and plans to get his associate's degree in collision repair in May.

Carter received a \$15,000 scholarship to attend the school, because he placed second at a SkillsUSA competition. SkillsUSA is a national organization that provides support for students entering technical, skilled, and service career fields.

"I went to SkillsUSA for the first time in 11th grade. It was a big deal, because my school never competed in that before. I was able to win third place," he said. "Senior year, I came back and took second place. I might do it again at the college level."

The competition is divided into several sections. The first task is hands-on and requires students to fix a dent in a fender. Competitors then need to come up with a handwritten estimate on a car. There's also a written assessment and an interview process.

Carter said he accepted the SkillsUSA scholarship because he wanted to do more than use the skills he already had.

"I wanted to continue my education, because I wanted to be above the competition. I wanted to show I not only have skills with my hands, but that I'm smart, too," said Carter, who is also a resident assistant on campus.

This past summer, Carter balanced his coursework with an internship at Faulkner Collision Center, an auto body and repair shop in South Philadelphia. He said he did a little bit of everything during the internship, including detail work and painting. He planned to start working there full-time, mainly as a painter, after his summer classes end.

Carter said the biggest challenge he faces in working in the automotive industry is that people don't expect him to be capable of good work because he's so young.

"People try to take advantage of my age. ... My biggest obstacle is trying to break down those barriers."

In the future, Carter said he'd like to open his own body shop or become a high school shop teacher. Having mentored younger students while he was in high school, Carter still returns to Randolph periodically to help. He said he'd be excited to teach others what he was taught and to help younger students achieve their own career goals.

"I think it's cool teaching people about this because I like it so much."

*Michaela Ward was an intern at the Notebook this summer.*

---



Source URL: <http://thenotebook.org/blog/158870/cte-success-stories-auto-body-repair-kadeem-carter-randolph>