



Student Spotlight: Axel Skobba

Information Provided by Hilda Garrison, M. Ed, Northeast Regional Coordinator,
Great Promise Partnership;

Suki Janssen, Director Athens-Clarke County Government Solid Waste Department; and
Melissa Griffin, Foothills Regional Director for Workforce Development

When he was just six years old, Axel Skobba spent “the best day in (his) life” at the Athens-Clarke County (ACC) Solid Waste Department. (See photo, right). He loved the garbage trucks, and his parents brought him to tour the facility, ride in a truck, and meet the staff. He was hooked from that moment. When he was old enough to ride his bike around the neighborhood, he would spend his weekdays following the mini-packer trash trucks around, assisting staff with emptying the roll-carts.



As a 12-year old, during the 2019-2020 school year, Axel was given an opportunity to participate in an internship with ACC Solid Waste. He volunteered every Tuesday and Thursday from 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM, shadowing the mechanics; helping educators with projects and programs; and working downtown Athens events (Twilight and AthFest). He even designed the 2019 ACC Waste Management holiday card.

Message from the Superintendent

A guiding belief for us at the Foothills Regional High School is that every student's dream and pathway to success is unique and special, and that it is our commitment—our privilege—to support those dreams. As you have seen in the Foothills Review newsletters over the past couple of years, and in the hallways of our Foothills sites, those student dreams are as inspiring and beautiful as they are diverse. Lest we think we've seen them all, along comes Axel Skobba who, from the age of six, wanted only to drive mini-packer trash trucks and preach about the importance of trash collection and solid waste management. What an honor it is for us to help support Axel in his goals as he works towards his high school diploma! - *Sherrie*

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As part of his internship, **Suki Janssen, Director of the Athens-Clarke County Government Solid Waste Department**, invited 12 year-old Axel to speak at the Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA) Georgia Chapter fall conference on Jekyll Island. He prepared a PowerPoint presentation and presented it to nearly 200 SWANA members. The presentation was about his passion for solid waste management, collection trucks, and his thoughts about the future of solid waste collection/management. Janssen notes, "He was the youngest presenter in our history. He did a fantastic job, better than many adults."

A few months before Axel's sixteenth birthday, as Axel was enrolling at the Clarke County Foothills site, he was asked if he would be interested in working for ACC Solid Waste once he turned 16. His immediate answer: "What do you think?" At once, Janssen contacted the **Northeast Regional Great**

Promise Partnership (GPP) Coordinator, Hilda Garrison, and the ACC Human Resources Department to see if Axel could participate in the GPP program while a student at Foothills. Great Promise Partnership is an initiative of the Georgia Department of Education's CTAE Department. Janssen explains, "Together we all made this work out for Axel. Axel became the first GPP student from Foothills and the first GPP Worker I for the Athens-Clarke County Government. During this past year, he has completed ride-a-longs for all Collection Division routes, learned to operate a leaf and limb boom, and shadowed staff at the Center for Hard to Recycle Materials (CHaRM) and Landfill, but his favorite thing to do is ride with Larry Henderson, Driver I, to collect backyard customers. He now is driving a mini-packer by himself, collecting our compost customers three days a week. He gets paid for 20 hours a week as a GPP employee, yet he volunteers for us beyond those hours at weekend events including UGA football games and other special events in downtown Athens."

Now 17 years old and working on his high school diploma at Clarke County Foothills, Axel is living his dream, one that is unique and special to him. He is learning valuable skills and progressing steadily towards graduation while also providing important services to his community. Suki Janssen sums it up, noting that "Axel is an asset to our department. He is more knowledgeable about collection trucks than most of the adult staff. He asked if he could work full-time for us once he finishes high school and was concerned that graduating too early (before 18) would prohibit him from working for us. It doesn't, and we hope that Axel will be working for us full-time after the holidays while going to college. Axel is a remarkable young man dedicated to our Department. We are truly fortunate to work alongside Axel."



2415 Jefferson Road, Suite B
Athens, GA 30607
(706) 395-9775

The Foothills Vision

Foothills Regional High School strives to be an accessible, high-quality high school option that is flexible and responsive to the needs of the People of Georgia and its communities.