

My name is Mykayla Spielman, and my journey at ROCKWOOL is proof that with determination, opportunity, and support, it is possible to build a career you are proud of—starting from the ground up.

I began working at ROCKWOOL in October 2022 as a General Operator, earning \$18.50 per hour. While I was new to ROCKWOOL's processes, I had already spent several years in manufacturing. From my first day, I came in eager to learn and ready to work. I asked questions, observed those around me, and made it a priority to understand not just how tasks were completed, but why each step mattered to the success of the operation. I knew that growth starts with curiosity and commitment.

That mindset paid off quickly. In December 2022, I was promoted to Machine Technician, increasing my wage to \$20.00 per hour. This role allowed me to take on more responsibility, develop technical skills, and play a direct role in keeping production running efficiently. That promotion didn't just build my skill set—it built my confidence and sparked my desire to continue advancing.

Recognizing the importance of education in August 2023, I applied for the West Virginia Learn and Earn grant through the Blue Ridge Community and Technical College (BRCTC) Martinsburg campus. Balancing full-time work with coursework was demanding, and there were many long days that tested my endurance. However, I viewed every late night and early morning as an investment in my future.

Through the Learn and Earn program, I gained hands-on electrical and technical training that aligned perfectly with ROCKWOOL's maintenance needs. What I learned in the classroom immediately translated to real-world applications on the job, making the experience both empowering and rewarding. This connection between learning and doing gave me the confidence to step into a skilled trade and envision a long-term career as an Electrician.

Some of the most impactful classes included the ABB robotics course with Rob Hopkin, where my partner and I programmed a robot to play tic-tac-toe, and the wiring class with Mark Bittner. Even in introductory courses, instructors encouraged growth beyond the basics, offering advanced projects to challenge and inspire students who were ready to go further. Their support made learning exciting and motivating.

In May 2025, I proudly graduated from the program and earned my certificate. Just one month later, in June 2025, I stepped into my current role as an Electrician in the Operational Maintenance department at ROCKWOOL, earning \$40.00 per hour. Today, I help ensure our equipment operates safely and reliably, applying my education and hands-on experience to solve complex problems every day. My background as an Operator continues to give me valuable insight, allowing me to approach challenges with a deeper understanding of production needs.

Looking back, my journey from General Operator to Machine Technician to Electrician demonstrates what is possible when ambition meets opportunity. The West Virginia Learn and Earn program:

- * Expanded my skills and dramatically increased my earning potential
- * Provided in-demand technical training that leads to real careers
- * Made it possible to grow within the same company while building a future

I am incredibly proud of how far I have come and deeply grateful for the partnership between ROCKWOOL and BRCTC that helped make this path achievable. My hope is that my story inspires others to take the first step, keep learning, and believe that an entry-level role can be the beginning of a meaningful, high-skill career they truly enjoy.