



Rolling Into Freedom

Five things we learned from our son's pursuit to fulfill his childhood passion of driving a "big rig".

01. A Class A CDL can be obtained quickly

Our son earned a welding diploma through dual enrollment in his Georgia high school, securing a job before graduation. Obtaining a CDL was quicker, taking five weeks, including a two-week learner's permit study and three weeks of intense behind-the-wheel training at a private training school. While private CDL school is fast-paced, some prefer the slightly longer public technical school for a more comprehensive learning experience.

02. Not every carrier is a good fit

Our son is participating in the FMCSA's Safe Driver Apprenticeship Pilot (SDAP) program which means his options were limited to carriers participating in the pilot and that he'd have to move since no carriers in Georgia were yet approved. Here's where we are so grateful to have been introduced to Lindsey Trent of Next Gen Trucking. Having Lindsey to coach and guide us through our options was invaluable. As such, our son has joined a smaller, employee-focused carrier with an excellent implementation of the SDAP program – a perfect fit for a young truck driver.

03. The pay is good- very good

OTR truck drivers have excellent earning potential, often surpassing welding jobs. The adage "If the wheels ain't turning, you ain't earning" emphasizes the direct correlation between effort and income. As experience grows, additional endorsements and opportunities further enhance the earning potential for truck drivers like my son.

04. It's a great way to see new places

Quite frankly, from a parent's perspective, we wanted our son to go beyond the comfort of his hometown – knowing there are many more places to see, experiences to live and people to meet. He is now living in a relatively rural area of Wisconsin, and while similar to his hometown in Georgia, is really a world away. The distance may be the toughest part for Lynne, but knowing this new job will take our son all across the U.S. makes it easier.

05. We learned to be open-minded about a field we never really considered

Our son had always been clear that the traditional college experience was not for him, and we were very supportive of this decision. However, if you had asked us whether we would prefer our son to be a welder or a truck driver, we would have naively chosen a welder. The reality is that today, given what we've learned, we would be open to encouraging either of these careers. Still, for the reasons you've read about above, we would highly encourage our son to pursue commercial truck driving.

BY: JEFF DODSON

Jeff is the father of Will Dodson, an 18 year old over-the-road driver with Badger Express. Jeff, Will, and mom Lynne are pictured left.

High school students have so many future career opportunities in the field of trucking. We encourage students and parents to learn more about careers in the vital trucking industry.

Next Gen Trucking Association

