

# EKCEP Success

S T O R I E S

everyday people and their remarkable achievements

## James River Coal, JobSight, Kenny Adams, Cova Nantz: A Stellar Partnership Produces Stellar Results

*There is only one Michael Jordan*, and he is a sports superstar, not a coal miner.

But the James River Coal Company has discovered two employees who match Jordan's star quality, thanks to the employer services provided by the Eastern Kentucky Concentrated Employment Program, Inc. (EKCEP), according to Harlan Davidson, director of human resources for James River.

By using EKCEP's Employer-Specific Orientation and Screening (ESOS), On-the-Job Training (OJT), and JobFit on-line job-profiling system, James River Coal has pinpointed that miners Kenny Adams and Cova Nantz have the attitude, aptitude, and ability to become key players in the company's Perry County mining operations, Davidson says.

"The second shift is where we're digging the coal, and that's when we're at our busiest," Davidson says. "You'll find your 'Michael Jordans' – your top miners – on that shift, and these two guys definitely are 'Michael Jordans.'"

The two star miners operate the machinery crucial to successful mining.



Cova Nantz



Kenny Adams

Adams, 24, operates a roof-bolting machine at the company's Blue Diamond Coal mine at Leatherwood. He uses the hulking machine to drill vertical holes in the mine roof and insert steel bolts up to six feet long that "sandwich" the overlying roof strata together and secure them safely above miners' heads.

At the company's Leeco mine at Jeff, Nantz, 26, runs a continuous-mining machine, an intimidating device with rows of spinning metal teeth that break a solid underground wall of coal into chunks that are transported out of the mine.

"If the machines they're running don't go, there's no need to do anything else," Davidson says. "They're the key to mining coal."

Underground miners typically are not trained to operate those machines until they have been mining for several years, and some miners never operate them, Davidson says. Adams and Nantz were running their machines less than five months after starting to work for the company.

"They've went from the bottom to the top in a flash, and all because of their attitude," he says.

To share your WIA success stories in future issues of EKCEP Success Stories, contact Michael Cornett at EKCEP, 606-436-5751 or e-mail him at [mcornett@ekcep.org](mailto:mcornett@ekcep.org)



The circumstances from which both men came to the company make their rapid progress even more impressive. Adams had no experience in coal mining, working as a landscaper and as a butcher at a Leslie County supermarket. Nantz, also of Leslie County, had worked in the mines for a private contractor, but says he was never given an opportunity to move beyond "grunt work" or pick up skills necessary for a better-paying position.

The testing and training Adams and Nantz received through EKCEP's employer services revealed they had the inherent skills to operate multi-million-dollar mining equipment and belonged on the "fast track" to advancement, despite their lack of experience.

*"Those services are doing a better job of helping us now than we are helping ourselves."*

Adams and Nantz began their ascents with James River Coal through the ESOS program. Like many of EKCEP's employer services, ESOS relieves local employers of many time-consuming human resources and training tasks, says Jack Duff, manager of the Perry County JobSight, a collaborative partnership of workforce and training agencies administered by EKCEP. The Perry County JobSight is located at the L.K.L.P. Community Action Council at Jeff.

ESOS – developed in response to employers' desire to reduce turnover by effectively prescreening applicants – provides pre-employment classes to job applicants, using job-specific content selected or provided by the employer. At the end of the one or more weeks of ESOS job-readiness classes, the applicants understand working conditions and expectations, and the employer has a better idea of who is right for the job.

When an employer uses ESOS, JobSight staff members step in and perform any number of human resources functions. That employer is then presented with only the most qualified applicants for job vacancies.

Duff says one of his key roles in James River Coal's ESOS was providing detailed explanations of the company's insurance and retirement benefits.

"Sometimes miners don't sign up for benefits they really need just because they don't understand them, so it's important that we explain them well," Duff says. After ESOS, "they knew all about the benefits they would get long before they ever stepped foot in the mines."

During their ESOS, Adams and Nantz also participated in EKCEP's JobFit internet-based job-matching service. JobFit matches detailed profiles of job seekers' skills, aptitudes, and personalities to the precise requirements of a specific job. Job seekers create a profile by taking an on-line JobFit survey that assesses their thinking styles, behavior patterns, interests, and skills, then compares them to profiles of an employer's best-performing workers.

A close match in all aspects of the JobFit profile greatly improves the chances that the employee will enjoy and succeed on the job.

The profiles of Adams and Nantz revealed they had the skills to perform very well in the mining jobs they were pursuing. In fact, Davidson says Nantz' JobFit profile was so impressive that the company chose to use it as the standard against which it will evaluate future prospects' JobFit profiles.

After completing ESOS and JobFit, Adams and Nantz were enrolled in the OJT program and went to work. For a total of 720 hours, both men got hands-on training at their respective mines as if they were full-time employees at James River Coal, says Brian Fields, OJT coordinator at the Perry County JobSight. Fields says the OJT program can help an employer cover as much as one-half of trainees' salaries during the training period. Successfully completing the OJT period guarantees that a trainee will become a full-time employee.

Adams credits the OJT program as reason he was able to ascend to running the all-important roof-bolting machine in such a short time.

For more than 35 years, EKCEP—the Eastern Kentucky Concentrated Employment Program, Inc.—has served 23 mountain counties in eastern Kentucky with workforce development, training, and employment programs to meet the region's changing needs.

EKCEP operates the JobSight network of workforce centers, where more than a dozen state and federal employment and training programs are gathered under one roof to meet the needs of eastern Kentucky's job seekers and employers.

EKCEP also administers programs that deliver tiered levels of services—including assistance with tuition and books—to adults, dislocated workers, and economically disadvantaged young people under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA). Delivered through the JobSight network, these WIA programs use a wide variety of resources to help customers advance their careers.

For more information on what EKCEP'S WIA programs can do for you, visit [www.ekcep.org](http://www.ekcep.org), contact your local JobSight location, or e-mail EKCEP's central office at [ekcep@ekcep.org](mailto:ekcep@ekcep.org).

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"When I first came on with the program, I wasn't allowed to touch it – just to watch," Adams says. "But by the time I was allowed to get on it, I already knew how to work it, and I just took to it naturally.

"I wouldn't be near where I am if not for OJT," he continues. "I'd have been 'on the belt' nowhere close to the roof bolter, and it probably would have taken maybe 10 years to get there."

Adams' ever-present smile and humble attitude have already allowed him to make great strides in his job and with other miners on his shift, says Hershel Asher, general manager of James River Coal's mines.

"I'd like to have about 150 guys like Kenny," Asher says. "He's got one of the best attitudes of anyone I've met, and that helped him get in here as a 'green hat,' hit the ground running, and get respect from the other guys."

Asher also complimented EKCEP's employer services, particularly the OJT program.

"We see what their interests are early on, and can put them exactly where they need to be," Asher says. "We all win with the program."

Rick Campbell, Nantz' supervisor at Leeco, echoed those sentiments while crediting EKCEP's employer services for Nantz' discovery.

"Cova does a good job and will continue to do a good job because he's a smart man," Campbell says, "and the OJT program is a good program. The more it can help us find good miners like him, the better."

Nantz says the program has made a "world of difference" in his life. He says his previous mining job left plenty to be desired.

"We got no benefits and no insurance – just a paycheck," he says. "I was just a laborer and had no opportunity to learn skills that would make me more valuable or let me work my way up into anything."

Nantz says that changed during his OJT training, when he successfully trained to run the continuous-mining machine. Now, his high-demand skills have him looking at his long-term future for the first time.

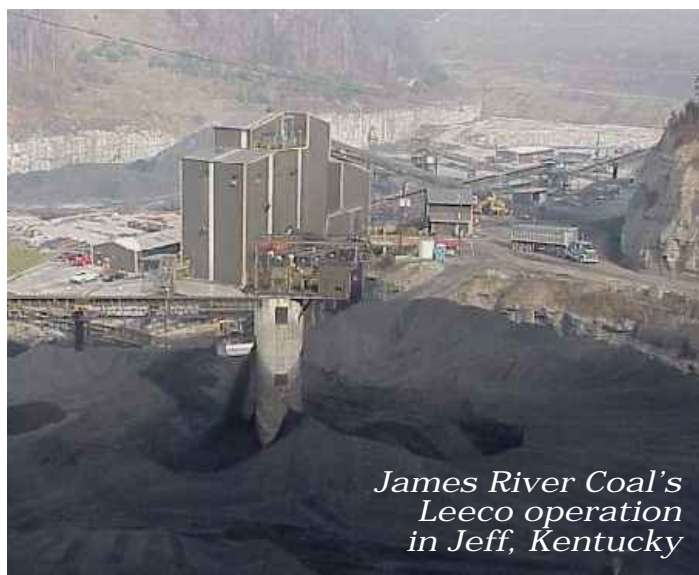
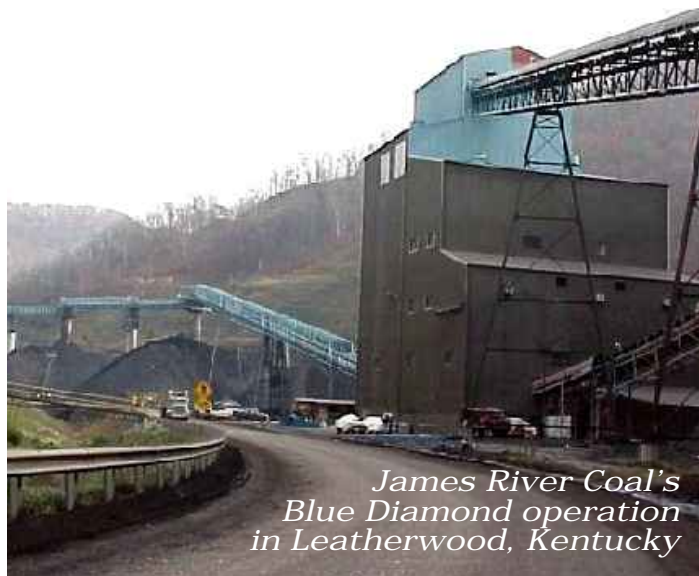
"I'll make a career out of it," Nantz says. "I'll be here as long as they'll have me."

Adams is also thinking in terms of a long and well paid career with James River Coal.

Davidson says the skills Adams and Nantz brought to the company and refined since starting to work should allow them to continue to move upward and work with the company until retirement.

Those skills might never have been unearthed had it not been for EKCEP's employer services, Davidson says.

"Those services are doing a better job of helping us now than we are helping ourselves," Davidson says. "We were very lucky to find these guys by using those services, and we're going to keep right on using them." 🌐



**Successful**  
T H O U G H T S

"Some people want it to happen,  
some wish it would happen,  
others make it happen."

– Michael Jordan