

Case Study: Tri-County Career Center

October 2015 - February 2016 • Nelsonville, Ohio

Introduction

Shortly after graduating from Tri-County in May 2015, I was asked by their marketing department to work on a series of design projects. These deliverables included a placemat design for local restaurants, a postcard for event advertising, and a 8-page brochure for enrollment marketing.

I served as the sole designer on these projects, working in conjunction with several Tri-County staff members: Amy Doerfler (Marketing Coordinator), Connie Altier (Principal), Tom McGreevy (Assistant Principal), and Ron Cassidy (Director of Adult Education).

The Problem

The goal for the placemat design was to promote high school career-training programs to the community. These were distributed to local restaurants throughout Athens, Hocking, and Perry counties, and were also used for in-house events where meals were served.

The postcard design was a direct advertising tactic for an upcoming "Career Night." Tri-County hosted this event for community members and local high school students to visit various programs and see live demonstrations after hours. To encourage attendance, the event also featured raffle drawings and prizes.

The brochure design was my largest project with Tri-County. They had a fixed page count but a significant amount of information they needed to get into the hands of potential students. This brochure promoted both high school programs and adult learner courses. Because the brochure was intended for direct mail, it needed to be designed with a specific layout to accommodate postal standards while still telling the story of Tri-County's success through a dedicated alumni page.

My Creative Process

My process was relatively linear, though it wasn't always straightforward. I didn't sketch the placemat or postcard on paper first because I had a solid understanding of the look I wanted to create to match the vision of the Tri-County team. We went through many iterations for these two pieces, mainly because the program information changed frequently. It was a constant challenge to figure out how to visually communicate the shifting data I was given.

For the brochure, I used paper and pencil to mock up each page and plan the layouts. I intentionally placed the alumni stories on the final pages so that after reading about the programs, the viewer could see real-world proof that the education actually works. I faced some hurdles with this being my first "heavy-duty" print project. At the time, I was very green when it came to managing margins, bleeds, and color profiles for professional printing.

Conclusion

The projects were a success in the community. The paper placemats were rolled out to local restaurants and the Career Night event ended up having a very solid turnout. A personal highlight for me was actually receiving the finished brochure in my own mailbox; seeing the physical result of those months of work was incredibly rewarding.

Looking back on this a decade later, I see how much I've evolved. If Tri-County asked me to complete similar projects today in 2026, the process would go much smoother and the deliverables would be even more on-brand. I have gained a significant amount of technical knowledge and perspective in the ten years since I was that 18-year-old designer, but these projects remain a proud foundation of my career.