

BREAKING THE MOLD

September 2014

Part 6

NORTHERN MAINE COMMUNITY COLLEGE RECOGNIZES STUDENTS IN NON-TRADITIONAL PROGRAMS

Enthusiastic and driven are two words that describe Hodgdon native Harley Wiggins, an automotive technology and diesel hydraulics student at NMCC. Prior to being a dual major student, Harley attended NMCC in 2012 and earned a certificate in welding and metal fabrication. Harley's interest in the trades began at an early age. As a child, Harley enjoyed bonding with her father while helping him fix his motorcycle. In high school, Harley attended the welding program at Region Two School of Applied Technology in Sherman, Maine. Harley's mother suggested she try welding because she studied welding in school and thought Harley would like it. Growing up, Harley's parents encouraged her to explore different hobbies and interests. In regards to career choice, Harley states, "My parents have always told me that I can do whatever I want."

Harley decided to pursue automotive technology because she wanted to learn how to fix her own vehicle. "I'm independent. I don't want to rely on others. I want to learn how to fix things myself." Her true passion is diesel hydraulics, where she plans on pursuing a career in the field. Next May, Harley will be receiving two associate in applied science degrees; one in diesel hydraulics technology and the other in automotive technology. She would like to find employment in Aroostook County, however, she may move to Bangor if opportunities arise. Her interests include heavy equipment mechanics, working for a company such as Caterpillar, or working in construction as an equipment operator.

There are several reasons why Harley enjoys working in the trades. "I like being in the shop and doing something different every day. It's just fun." She also likes the feeling of accomplishment she experiences after she fixes something and it works, stating that it's the "greatest feeling".



Photos: Harley in the Automotive Technology lab at NMCC

When discussing her time spent at NMCC, Harley reports that it has been a wonderful learning experience for her. Although she strongly feels that more female instructors are needed in these programs, Harley states, "My instructors are great. They explain things to me if needed. They also give me challenging jobs to do so I can learn and grow." Although she is the only female in her classes, Harley doesn't feel outnumbered. In fact, she sees it as a challenge. "I like to show that I can do more than them." Harley reports that she has a lot of fun in class and that she feels like she fits in.

Harley notes the advantages of being a female in diesel hydraulics and automotive technology, especially when it comes to problem solving. "Women think differently than men. They tend to think outside the box." Her size, however, can be

viewed as both an advantage and a disadvantage. “Because I am shorter than the boys and I have smaller hands, I can get into smaller places than they can. However, I’m not as strong and I can’t lift as much. I can’t always reach things.” Despite these limitations, her ability to learn is not affected. Her peers are always willing to help and her instructors make accommodations if needed to ensure that she is able to complete the task and get the most out of the experience.

Harley chose NMCC for different reasons. “When I visited the campus, I really liked it. NMCC seemed more open to women in the trades than other schools that I considered. I was accepted to another college, but I chose to attend NMCC.” Her father pursued nursing at NMCC several years ago, which also influenced her decision to attend the college. The small class size and the fact that NMCC was close to home was also appealing to Harley.



Photo: Harley in the Diesel Hydraulics lab at NMCC

Harley offers advice for females considering a career in diesel hydraulics or automotive technology. “Don’t be afraid to step outside your boundaries and try something new. Don’t feel you have to follow stereotypes and don’t worry about what other people think. Girls can do anything guys can do, and guys can do anything girls can do.” Harley also offers tips for success at NMCC. “Don’t stress over the little things. If you put your mind to it and know what you want, then you will reach your goal.”

Quick Facts:

Automotive Service Technicians & Mechanics

Job Duties: Inspect, repair, and perform basic care and maintenance on automotive vehicles.

Skills Needed: Dexterity, troubleshooting, critical thinking, complex problem solving, and customer service skills.

2012 National Average Pay: \$17.60/hour;
\$36,610/year

Job Outlook: Projected to grow 9% between 2012-2022

% of NMCC 2013 Automotive Technology Graduates Employed in the Field: 40%

Quick Facts:

Heavy Equipment Mechanics

Job Duties: Repair and replace damaged or worn parts, dismantle and reassemble heavy equipment, operate and inspect machines or heavy equipment to diagnose defects.

Skills Needed: Troubleshooting, operation monitoring and control, equipment maintenance, critical thinking, and problem solving skills.

2012 National Average Pay: \$22.14/hour;
\$46,100/year

Job Outlook: Projected to grow 10% between 2012-2022

% of NMCC 2013 Diesel Hydraulics Graduates Employed in the Field: 78%



Cited by the Aspen Institute as one of the nation's top 150 community colleges for commitment to student success and educational excellence.

For more information about non-traditional programs available at NMCC, please contact Lori Smith, Student Support Career Specialist at 768-2793 or nlosmith@nmcc.edu