

Some Like It Hot; Some Like It Cold

TCTC Graduate Succeeds in Heating & Air Conditioning Field

Gasoline is up, stocks are down, but there is no volatility associated with the comfort level in our homes. The vast majority of houses built in the last 25 years contain central heating and air-conditioning. As a sophomore at Hubbard High School in 1980 Richard Gilliland observed the construction process very carefully. He also noted the installation of appliances such as washers, dryers and refrigerators. He thought to himself, "Whoever has the skills to fix these things will have a job in demand. For this reason, he enrolled in the Heating & Air-Conditioning program at the Trumbull Career & Technical Center. 28 years later, he reflected on the wisdom of his decision.

Gilliland stated, "At the TCTC, I learned the basics of my future trade. I acquired knowledge of electricity, refrigeration, the ability to read schematic diagrams and improved my mechanical ability. My program teacher, Mr. Schontz taught us to think outside of the box. He made you believe that you could do anything. Before selecting heating and air-conditioning, I looked at a number of fine trade programs. I highly recommend the TCTC to anyone pursuing a career in a technical field."

Gilliland started his career while still a senior in high school. He worked for a local appliance service company for nine years before he was hired as a service technician by the Whirlpool Corporation in 1990. He says the salary range for skilled technicians is in the range of \$60,000 and the job market is expanding. He was promoted to the position of Technical Consultant in 2000. His duties involve advising the technicians to diagnose and trouble shoot problems with household appliances.

The transition from an entry level to management position is automatic, but for those interested in making the move Gilliland says that good communication skills are paramount. "You gain respect by showing others that you have a better solution for the problem. You must speak clearly and convey your message in a positive manner. To succeed in this career field, you need to follow directions, be accountable for your actions and establish a solid record for attendance.

We live in uncertain economic times. The era of high wage-low skill jobs is a relic of the past. High school students need to decide on the best method to gain the skills necessary for the workforce of tomorrow. 28 years ago, Richard Gilliland looked at the construction boom from a different paradigm. He said, "If they build it, eventually, it must be fixed." Central heating, air-conditioning, and modern appliances are features that are part of the everyday fabric of our lives. We take them for granted until they break down. This is when we frantically reach for the telephone. Richard Gilliland has positioned himself to take our call.