

Career Impact

Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College

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WISCONSIN TO JAPAN

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One Great Experience!



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Career Impact

Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College

Career Impact is published for the community, alumni and friends of Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College.

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WITC is part of the Wisconsin Technical College System, with four campus locations (Ashland, New Richmond, Rice Lake and Superior), two outreach centers (Hayward and Ladysmith), a learning center in Spooner, and an administrative office in Shell Lake.

Visit our Website at witc.edu.

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MISSION STATEMENT
Learning is our passion. As Northwest Wisconsin's leader in technical education, WITC creates dynamic opportunities for career preparation and personal effectiveness. We are committed to making each and every experience with us meaningful and professional.

WITC is ranked the fourth best two-year college in the nation by Washington Monthly magazine.



Inside

4 Success is in the Details

WITC Graduates win SkillsUSA competition

6 Paid "Vacation" in Yellowstone

WITC Graduate lived, worked and played in Yellowstone National Park

8 Wisconsin to Japan

Two WITC Graduates, One Great Experience

11 New Programs

Youth and Aging programs offered at all WITC Campuses

12 The Puppy Project

Animal therapy is proven to help students with anxiety and loneliness

14 Against All Odds

Two student success stories are an inspiration



Success is in the Details



Story by Deborah Anderson,
Photos by Tom Szalajka

WITC Students, Joe Yakesh and Austin Cooper placed first at the state SkillsUSA competition

Nearly 6,000 contestants from across the United States attend the annual SkillsUSA competition in Kansas City, Mo. The multi-million dollar event showcases the best trade and technical students in the nation. Two of the many WITC high-performing students who have attended the conference in the past, Joe Yakesh and Austin Cooper in the residential construction and cabinetmaking program, placed first at the state competitions qualifying them to go on to the national SkillsUSA conferences.

Joe Yakesh came to WITC in 2003. In 2005, after finishing first in the SkillsUSA state competition in framing, he went on to finish third in the national conference. Austin Cooper, who graduated in 2014, placed first in cabinetmaking at the state competition, and then at the national competition pulled out all the skills he had learned to place first in the nation.

Yakesh and Cooper have both gone on to fulfill the career goals they had for themselves.

Joe Yakesh enjoyed working at construction jobs during high school. He decided to pursue it as a career, enroll-



Joe Yakesh



Austin Cooper

“I looked at other colleges, but WITC was the only option I found where they teach all the different skills — like CNC, drafting and construction.”

Austin Cooper

ing in the two-year residential construction and cabinetmaking (RCCM) program that was then called wood technics.

“The courses I took in the program — the whole system — was well rounded and a good fit for me,” said Yakesh.

Yakesh’s ultimate goal was to eventually become a general contractor.

“I am a detail oriented, kind of OCD type of person,” Yakesh said.

Since graduating in 2005 he has built his own contracting business, Quality Construction and Remodeling. Currently he has three new construction homes and three remodeling projects in progress.

“There has been plenty of work,” Yakesh said. “I am adding new employees and subcontractors each year.”

Yakesh said he feels lucky, that he would not be where he is today without the training he received at WITC, the

help of former employers and subcontractors who trusted him, and returning customers who value the work his company does.

“I want to give back to WITC and the RCCM program after what it did for me,” he said. Yakesh stays involved as a member of the WITC RCCM Advisory Committee, and also hires RCCM students over summer breaks.

After a brief stint in a manufacturing job right after graduating from high school in La Crosse, Wis., Austin Cooper decided that performing the same work over and over for days on end wasn’t for him. He decided to follow his passion for woodworking and enrolled in the residential construction and cabinetmaking program in 2012.

“I looked at other colleges, but WITC was the only option I found where they teach all the different skills — like CNC, drafting and construction,” said Cooper.

Building a house in the second year taught him a lot, said Cooper, but he felt his calling was to build custom cabinets and furniture. When instructor Chris Harder told him about a request for a student to serve an internship at Abby’s Custom Woodworking in Chippewa Falls, Wis., he jumped at the chance.

“It’s been hard to find people today who pay attention to detail, until I met Austin,” said owner Mark Abramowitz, who hired Cooper to work in his shop right after graduation.

Representing WITC in the National Skills USA Competition and being named the first place winner in cabinetmaking was definitely a highlight of Cooper’s WITC experience.

“I couldn’t believe it when I heard my name called,” recalled Cooper. “It was great! My garage is full of all the tools and equipment I won that were donated by sponsors.”

And that winning cabinet — built from start to finish with his own hands — shines in the light from his living room window.

PAID “Vacation” IN YELLOWSTONE

By Jena Vogtman

WITC Graduate lived, worked and played in Yellowstone National Park

Having to drive 82 miles just to get groceries may not sound appealing. However, for Cory Nelson, a 2014 graduate of the WITC automotive maintenance program, going the distance was just another part to what he and his girlfriend, Nichole Tanskanen, called their “paid vacation.” Why? Because they were realizing an opportunity to live, work and play in Yellowstone National Park.

“I saw on the wall in the auto shop that there was a flyer for Yellowstone Park Service Stations,” said Nelson.

Although Yellowstone Park Service Stations only has about 60-70 employees, they acquire about 700 applications for those spots each year. Once Nelson was in, Tanskanen’s application was also quickly accepted and together, they moved west into dormitory housing. Nelson’s work involved auto mechanics and towing.

“I went out there for the experience,” Nelson said. “I got to work on so many different cars, so many different problems and learned a lot of social skills.”

Brakes, tires, coolant systems, timing belts, fuel pumps, water pumps and bulbs were common issues Nelson dealt with.



Submitted photo



“You are on your own out there,” said Nelson.

“The main things we did were brakes. People would drive across the country and never get their car checked.”

With Yellowstone being a popular place for foreigners to travel, both Nelson and Tanskanen had to learn a new way of doing customer service and had to remove a lot of diesel from vehicles meant to use gas.

“The green pumps in Europe are unleaded gas,” said Nelson, shaking his head.

While what he learned in college came in handy, Nelson said a mechanic

couldn’t have enough knowledge out there. Every day was something new, something unexpected.

“There were days you have seven RVs lined up and there are two of you,” said Nelson. “The roads out there are really narrow, so a lot of RVs would slap mirrors as they passed each other.”

Being in the middle of a national park also meant that repairs took time and money.

“You had to wait for parts. A \$50 repair could end up costing a three night stay at a Yellowstone hotel,” said Nelson. “I had to do repairs at midnight because we were open 24/7.”

“I was always caught in bison jams,” Nelson said. “They don’t move, and I had to get places. The rangers are the only ones that can come through them.”

Towing quickly became one of his favorite parts of the job and he found himself amazed at some of the situations people found themselves and their vehicle in.

“One car hit a bison because they were filming it in the middle of the night going 40 mph. People aren’t paying attention. They are driving like maniacs out there.”

On their days off, the couple enjoyed the area’s finest treasures both in and out of the park.

“You hike. You fish, especially lake trout which is an invasive species there,” said Nelson. “We went everywhere—Bear Tooth Mountains, Jackson Hole, thermal pools, Wyoming, Mont.”

Wolves, coyotes, bears, elk and bison became a part of the usual animals one could run into. There was also a new kind of traffic to deal with.

“I was always caught in bison jams,” Nelson said. “They don’t move, and I had to get places. The rangers are the only ones that can come through them.”

The experience came to an end when the service stations closed-up shop for the winter months starting in September. Nelson traded the mountains of Yellowstone for a career at Kari Toyota in Superior, Wis.

“You can learn a lot on your own and have an adventure. Where do you want to spend your summer?”





First time international travelers, Allison Kollauf (L) and Jennifer Swanson (R), journeyed to Japan for an invaluable educational experience.



Wisconsin to Japan

Two WITC Graduates, One Great Experience!

Story & photos by Melissa Kramolis

To travel from small town northern Wisconsin to East Asia might be a stretch for some, but WITC-Ashland early childhood education graduates Allison Kollauf of Ashland and Jennifer Swanson of Mason put their fears aside and spent the summer in Japan with the Guy Healy USA Summer Camp Program.

“It was our first time being out of the country,” said Kollauf.

“I was so scared and so afraid of flying,” said Swanson. “I was going to decline the offer but I slept on it and the next day I said, ‘Yep, I’m going!’”

Kollauf and Swanson were selected by WITC for the program in which they served as American counselors teaching English activities to schoolchildren in Japan.



Submitted photo

“It was really rewarding and they were so excited and grateful we were there,” said Kollauf. “It was an amazing experience.”

Kollauf and Swanson participated in seven, three-day summer camps in various cities across Japan during the six weeks they spent in the country.

“As an educator, I learned how to teach children who don’t speak the same first language as myself and to bring that back to America will be such an amazing skill to have,” said Swanson.

Through an application and interview process, WITC selects a few students each year to attend the program. Academic Dean Laura Jasper, who coordinates WITC’s participation in the Guy Healy USA Summer Camp Program in Japan, said, “Such international experiences give our students self-confidence, a global perspective, critical-thinking skills and high employability.”

Counselors selected for the program receive airfare, food and lodging through the program. Additionally, WITC provided each student with a \$500 international scholar stipend to help cover the program acceptance fee, passport and tuition costs. They only needed spending money so they could explore on their days off. Kollauf and Swanson traveled to places like Osaka, Kyoto, Nagasaki and Tokyo to name a few.

“I did everything over there like navigating the subways in Tokyo,” said Swanson. “You learn a lot about what you’re capable of doing, it definitely pushes you outside of your comfort zone.”

Studies show that studying abroad positively influences the career path, worldview and self-confidence of students.

“It changed me as a person, and I learned so much about myself,” said Swanson. “I feel like I could go anywhere now.”

“It was an amazing experience,” said Kollauf. “It made me a better person and a better teacher.”

Kollauf is currently working at Marengo Valley Elementary School and is going to get her bachelor’s degree in elementary education online at UW-Superior with a goal of teaching Kindergarten someday. Swanson just started a new job at the Washburn Early Learning Center and is loving it. She plans to go on to get her bachelor’s degree as well with a dream of working in special education.

Kollauf and Swanson say their experience at WITC-Ashland was invaluable.

“You learn so much more [than other colleges], and your teachers truly care,” said Kollauf.

Kari Merritt, their early childhood education instructor, encouraged them to apply to go to Japan.

“She is the best person in the world that I’ve ever met,” said Swanson. “Honestly, I can’t even begin to talk about Kari and not cry because she is so great; through the support of going to Japan and throughout school, she is amazing.”

From America to Japan and beyond, these two friends are going places. They have the education, experience and drive to succeed. The future is in their hands.

“You learn a lot about what you’re capable of doing, it definitely pushes you outside of your comfort zone.”

Jennifer Swanson



Submitted photo

Experience. Success.

NEW PROGRAMS OFFERED AT ALL WITC CAMPUSES

Youth and Aging Programs

The job market is a continuously evolving field changing as our world changes. To adjust for these changes, WITC gets hands-on. The WITC staff go out into the field to discover what employers are looking for. After analyzing the findings, WITC revamps the programs and courses so students can always feel safe knowing they have chosen a lucrative major in the current economy. In response to these findings, WITC is thrilled to add gerontology—aging services professional and e-connect child care services to an evolving list of programs.

Gerontology—Aging Services Professional

In response to the changing needs of the older population, WITC is introducing this innovative program to be offered at all four WITC campuses. Designed to fit into busy lifestyles, the program will blend online and in-person experiential learning with community-based fieldwork. It is ideal for people entering the job market or choosing to enhance their current careers in service delivery or leadership roles in the gerontology field.

Seventy-eight million baby boomers nationwide will be 65 or older by the year 2030. To accommodate this fastest growing segment of our country’s population, it is increasingly important for innovative educational programs that train our workforce to cater to the aging population.



E-connect Child Care Services

Childcare is the fabric of American life and society. As families choose to have fewer children than they once did, there is a higher expectation of children who will one day represent our future. As expectations for children change, the expectations for providers change as well. Parents put their child’s life in someone else’s hands, and they expect a qualified provider who will enhance the child’s life artistically, academically and socially through hands-on learning. No pressure, childcare providers, but the future is in your hands.

E-connect child care services is WITC’s answer to the changing expectations of

childcare providers. The new program offered at every WITC campus as a one-year technical diploma will incorporate the first year of the early childhood education associate degree with Wisconsin Professional Preschool Credential coursework. Students enrolled in this program can mix and match online, day-time or evening courses based on convenience and learning style. Upon graduation, students will have the option to continue their education to obtain an associate degree and eventually transfer into a UW System through WITC’s Articulation Agreements for a bachelor’s degree.



The Puppy Project

Story by Sara Franc,
Photo by Brittany DeNucci

Animal-assisted therapy is an effective way for colleges to prevent anxiety and loneliness amongst students

Finals week can break even the strongest of us down, students and teachers alike. Walking through the campus halls during this special time of year, visitors might notice students vigorously highlighting, sprinting due to a technology malfunction or possibly slumped over in a chair sleeping. There is no need to be alarmed by these bizarre actions, everywhere students are stressed. In the chaos that encompasses the school during these stressful times, there is a calm center, the eye of the storm, otherwise known as The Puppy Project at WITC-Ashland where a batch of adorable puppies have been delivered.

The puppy “staff” were generously provided by the Chequamegon Humane Association in an effort to ease the stress of finals for students. Luckily for many college students who often turn to silly animal clips on YouTube during times of stress, there may be a scientific excuse to back up these, what some may call, procrastination tactics.

In a study, researchers from Georgia State University provided animal-assisted therapy to 55 students in a group setting at a small arts college. The group sessions were held twice monthly during an academic quarter. Students were invited to stop by and interact with the therapy dog, up to two hours. They were allowed to pet, hug, feed, brush, draw, photograph, and sit near and play fetch with the therapy dog. The findings suggested

that animal-assisted therapy could be an effective way for colleges to prevent anxiety and loneliness amongst students.

According to PAWS for People, interaction with a gentle, friendly pet has significant benefits. Those benefits include: lowering blood pressure, providing comfort, increasing socialization, lowering anxiety, decreasing feelings of isolation and alienation, increasing self-confidence. The list continues!

So the next time you’re stressing about an upcoming test, take some time to play fetch with your dog, visit the humane society or pull up that YouTube video of Rover jumping on the trampoline. Chances are if you play with a puppy, you will feel remarkably less anxious; it’s science.

According to researchers, animal-assisted therapy can reduce symptoms of anxiety and loneliness among students by 60%



Against All Odds

Stories of Success

Story by Liz Whitchurch, photos by Deborah Anderson and Debra Gregerson

Many students face some sort of obstacle while attending college; financial, work and family commitments are common hurdles. Challenges also come in the form of physical or learning impairments. WITC has a dedicated accommodation specialist on each campus to help all students reach their full potential.

Welding labs are notorious for the cacophony of pounding, scraping and

clanking. Definitely not an ideal learning environment for sensitive ears. But Vincent Almanza loves the racket because there was a time when he heard none of it. Now a student at WITC-New Richmond, he's planning a career as a welder.

The 2015 graduate of Hudson High School spent his K-12 education working with an interpreter due to severe hearing loss. But as his future loomed, he realized life will require him to work in

the hearing world.

"I won't always have an interpreter following me around," he said. "I need to deal with life on my own."

While Almanza was in high school, he tried welding in tech ed and loved it.

"I enjoy welding immensely," he said. "You need to do what you love and even when it gets frustrating you just have to stay with it."

Almanza chose WITC because of the college's high ratings, the 95 percent graduate job placement and the hands on nature of the welding program.

"You're not looking at a book showing you how to weld," he explained. "You're doing it. You have to do it to learn it."

Another reason Almanza chose WITC is "because of the accommodations WITC offers. They have so many available that are there if I need them."

Today Almanza hears with a Cochlear implant, a surgically implanted hearing apparatus. He now hears very well yet isn't fazed by the noisy welding lab.

"Vincent is doing just fine," said Jesse Novak, his WITC welding instructor. "I always ask if everyone understands my instruction, so it's easy for anyone to ask a question. And Vincent knows he can come to me anytime and we'll work it out."

Lindsey Wood is also taking advantage of the free student accommodation

services. As a high school student in Menomonie, Wis., Wood knew WITC was the right fit. She met Accommodation Specialist Heidi Diesterhaft after transferring from WITC-New Richmond to WITC-Rice Lake.

"She [Wood] hadn't yet been admitted to a program, as passing the entrance exams was challenging," said Diesterhaft. "We worked through all the classes she'd taken to determine a program that fit her."

After working in the Student Success Center to gain the skills needed to pass the entrance exams, Wood was accepted into the administrative professional program.

"She was put in touch with the right people at the right time, and then it was a matter of accommodating her abilities to make her time here rich," said Barb Malom, administrative professional instructor.

Wood summed up the qualities of WITC's accommodation specialists at

every campus when she said of Diesterhaft, "Heidi is an amazing resource to reach educational goals, find resources to assist with services during our education and after for those with disabilities. She is a great mentor to determine what is working and what needs to be improved to get the most out of classes and finally planning for the exit out of the comforts of family at WITC into the real world."

When asked about WITC's accommodation services, Malom emphatically said, "Our accommodations specialist should wear a SUPERWOMAN cape because she is the #1 advocate for our students and their success. She is visible, approachable and fearless when it comes to meeting the needs of our students. Where there is a will, Heidi finds a way to meet a need for our learners."

These examples only scratch the surface of students accessing the many available services WITC offers to help students succeed in college and build skills to succeed in life. For more details, visit witc.edu/stusvcs/disability.

Every WITC campus has a dedicated accommodation specialist who helps smooth the path and determine accommodation choices. The college offers quiet rooms for testing, extended testing times, interpreters, alternative media, assistive technology and more. The services are available upon request for those with documented disabilities.



Lindsey with Barb Malom, administrative professional instructor.

Career Impact

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WITC graduates start their careers right after graduation!



95% of WITC graduates are EMPLOYED

- 78% are employed in a job related to their education
- 98% are satisfied with the training they received at WITC



WISCONSIN
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Graduates from WITC earned an average yearly salary of \$35,795, with the majority working in Wisconsin and nearly three-fourths employed in WITC's 11-county district.

**Based on the 2013-2014 WITC Graduate Follow-Up Survey*