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Grant Program, Family Friend Help Dad Find New Career *Expansion of CVTC Industrial Mechanic program helps local industries*

Eau Claire, WI – Doug Olson knew he was watching a remarkable moment. John Prindle, who he had known for decades, was working on math problems with fellow students at the Chippewa Valley Technical College Manufacturing Education Center and telling them how he arrived at the answer.

Olson knew Prindle hadn't suddenly become a math whiz, but rather the availability of a grant-funded math tutor for the Industrial Mechanic students made all the difference for a student who had long struggled with math.

"The grant was the key to John's success," said Olson, who works as an employer engagement specialist for CVTC.

In 2016, CVTC announced it would be taking the lead in a \$5 million Department of Labor TechHire Partnership grant to be shared with other technical colleges to prepare young adults for well-paying, high-growth jobs. CVTC's \$1.7 million local share through an IMPACT grant program was to be spent over four years to enhance the Industrial Mechanic program and supply much-needed industrial maintenance workers for the local labor market.

According to Olson, Prindle is a good example of a person helped by the grant. A long relationship between Olson and the Prindle family also played a role.

"Doug Olson has been a family friend for years, and he's the one who walked me over to the Industrial Mechanic program," Prindle said.

When Olson saw Prindle waving at him through his office window one day, he went out and had a chat. He learned Prindle had just dropped a math class essential for his Automation Engineering Technology program. Having known Prindle so long, Olson thought that program was not a good fit for Prindle.

Prindle, 35, had a good work history since his graduation from Eau Claire Memorial High School, but hadn't firmly settled into a career. He worked a number of different jobs before settling for a while at Wisconsin Body & Hoist in Lake Hallie. But by that point in his life he and his wife, Tammy, had a baby girl, now 4 years old, and Prindle felt strong motivation to establish himself in a way that would ensure he could provide for his young family.

“I wanted to do something different, so I went to CVTC for Automation Engineering Technology,” Prindle said. “But I hadn’t had a math class in 14 years. I’m more of a hands-on learner.”

“He was always doing something mechanical,” Olson said. “He used to take lawn mowers apart when he was 9 years old. I knew Industrial Mechanic would be a much better fit for him.”

“When Doug walked me down to Industrial Mechanic and gave me the gist of the program,” Prindle said. “I found out it was mostly hands-on.”

Prindle enrolled and found a home, and a career. Some of his past work pneumatics and wiring helped but much of the instruction was new to him.

“Tim Tewalt and Darrin Falk were excellent teachers,” Prindle said. “They took a lot of the anxiety out of it. I struggled with some things, but they and Jeff Johnson were here to help and pushed me to succeed.”

As program tutor, Michelle Waters helped get Prindle over the math hurdle that troubled him in past education settings.

Also benefitting from the grant program is Charter NEX Films in Bloomer, which hired Prindle. The severe shortage of industrial mechanics is the reason CVTC chose to concentrate on the area with its grant funds.

“I had a few offers, some that I didn’t think were a good fit,” Prindle said. “At Charter NEX it’s been absolutely fantastic. The people there are very patient and informative. They kept me going in the right direction.”

Prindle is completing in-house training now, and hopes for a bump in pay when he’s through it.

“I absolutely think this is a career that will help me provide for my family,” Prindle said. “Our checking account balance is going up, and that’s what I like to see.”

With over 97 programs offered both online and on-campus, Chippewa Valley Technical College delivers superior, progressive technical education which improves the lives of students, meets the workforce needs of the region, and strengthens the community. CVTC programs are designed with input of business and industry to prepare graduates for today’s jobs, with 95 percent employed within six months of graduation and associate degree graduates earning an average annual salary of \$46,816.

Cutline:

CVTC Industrial Mechanic graduate John Prindle performs maintenance on a grinder machine at his new job at Charter NEX Films in Bloomer. A federal IMPACT grant that allowed CVTC to expand the program and add a math tutor for students was instrumental in Prindle’s success.

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