

Michelle,

I thought you might be interested
in this article from our local newspaper.

Paul Callahan

West Chester's Debbie Stidham 'cheerleads' for continuing education

West Chester resident Debbie Stidham thought "it would be helpful to understand exactly what we do at GE." So, she enrolled in an aircraft orientation class at Cincinnati Technical College.

She liked it. She liked it so much she is now pursuing an associate degree in aviation technology and airframe and powerplant licensure.

Since last April, Stidham has been spending two or three nights a week at CTC. Some of those nights go as long as five or six hours and she admits that it is sometimes difficult.

"I'm a composition clerk during the day," she explained. "I assemble military maintenance manuals. I've never done anything mechanical. I've never worked with metals or any kind of hardware until now."

She's also the only female studying aviation at night. She said she was more than a little skeptical in an all male classroom. But, it has worked out.

"The guys helped me in learning the different tools," she said, "And I helped some of them with the math and physics."

Stidham has worked at GE for three years. She credits the company with helping her get through

this training.

"GE is the best place to work in this city. The company is totally supportive of their employees' goals, and the tuition reimbursement plan really helps."

She notes that her husband thinks her career choice is great, even though he enjoys making remarks about "Rosie the Riveter." He also likes the fact that Stidham now does more mechanical jobs around the house.

Her experiences at CTC have made her a cheerleader for continuing education. She tells her co-workers they should go back to school. She's honest about the difficulty of learning after being out of school, but she explained, "it's amazing how things come together all at once."

Stidham also has praise for CTC and its instructors. "Every instructor is willing to work with and offer additional help to the students," she said. "Jim Schmid (aviation coordinator) and Tom Stark (dean of the math and science division) helped us get through especially hard areas of classes.

It's great to know that everyone wants us to succeed and will put in the extra time so that we do."

Paul Callahan, director of continuing education at CTC, says he is seeing more and more students like Stidham. "Because of changes in the job market, people are seeing the need to expand their skills. Jobs they entered 10, even five, years ago are different now. Many of them require new skills. Plus, we are seeing lots of people who, like Debbie, want to change their career path."

He added, "We are finding that the adult student is an excellent one. He or she is serious about studies and is set on succeeding."

Callahan explains that CTC's special student services play an important part in insuring the success of students. Career planning and counseling along with diagnostic testing help students make the right career choices and then proceed along an education path best geared for them. Developmental education courses are designed for those students, especially adults, who need refresher work in the basic skills learned earlier in their lives.

Callahan also said that because so many more adults are returning to college, many of the college's more than 40 associate degree and certificate programs can be pursued at night.