

POWER

TO THE FUTURE

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STUDENTS
IN THE
AGRICULTURAL
POWER AND
EQUIPMENT
TECHNICIAN
PROGRAM HAVE
CONSTRUCTED
SOLID CAREER
PATHS

Alicia Lutscher, a second-year WITC student says, “I grew up watching others fix trucks and cars and started fixing them myself from about the age of 14. I remember helping my dad and others work on car engines, and I help around the farm where my mom lives.”

Lutscher is a 2012 Ellsworth, Wis., High School graduate who wasn’t sure what she wanted to do with her life beyond high school. A WITC career specialist introduced Lutscher to the agricultural power and equipment technician program and she was immediately interested.

As the only female in her class, Lutscher often fills a variety of rolls. “Sometimes I’m the organizer, sometimes the ‘mom,’” she explains. But one thing is clear – Lutscher knows her way around an engine, be it auto, tractor or otherwise.

At first glance, a visit to the Ag power engine lab garners a look at the students with heads bent over engines, the smell of diesel fuel and the amicable cajoling shouted over the grumbling sounds of a tractor engine. But when you look closer, you realize the structured chaos at work. Lutscher blends in well, though she’s the only female in the second-year class. But there you will find her focused on pulling the electrical system out of a Bobcat. She doesn’t miss a beat as she shouts out answers to mechanical questions and lets others know where a classmate or instructor is without losing concentration on her own engine work.

But these students are more than just business, as Lutscher says. She recently helped organize the Ag Power Club’s trip to Waterloo, Iowa, to visit a John Deere production plant, and to Racine, Wis., to tour the Case-New Holland (CNH) facility.

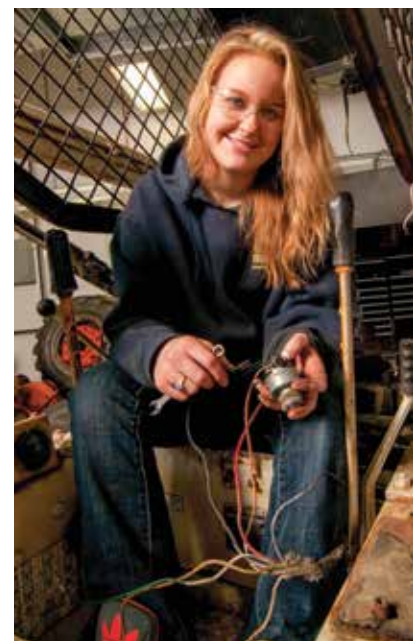
“At CNH, we saw everything in production – parts, cabs, engines. It was great,” she says. The group also stopped in Kenosha, Wis., to tour the SNAP-ON innovation center.

“It was all good,” Lutscher says, “but the SNAP-ON history museum was probably the best part. They showed the entire development of their tools from idea to completion.”

“I definitely recommend this program (agricultural power and equipment technician) to others interested in big engines. But I also think people should shadow the program to get a feel for it,” Lutscher says. “You work hard and learn a lot.”

Lutscher graduates from the two-year program this spring after she completes her internship with Value Implement in Ellsworth. “I’ve applied for an opening at Minnesota Ag Group in Hastings, and I got an interview!” But she’s not sure if she’s done at WITC. “I’m looking at WITC’s accounting program, too.”

“If I’m offered the job,” she says, “I definitely feel good and I’m ready to get started.”



CITY LIFE'S NOT ALL IT'S CRACKED UP TO BE

When this 19-year-old rural Amery, Wis., native chose an avenue to pursue after high school, he looked at Chicago Avenue as the place for him. So, he packed his bags and set off to the Windy City to attend Universal Technical Institute. But, as the saying goes, all that glitters is not gold, and after only one semester, Cole Andersen found himself disenchanted by the sights and sounds – and education – proffered by the big city.

Back in Amery, Andersen wanted to pursue a different avenue, one that better suited his style and pace in learning. Still interested in learning how to repair the big engines, he considered the technical colleges in his area. His final decision: the unique-to-Wisconsin agricultural power and equipment technician program at WITC-New Richmond.

Andersen points out that because of the type of instruction and curriculum of the WITC program, a new student doesn't necessarily need much background in farming or power equipment. "The units last long enough to give you time to learn it right," he explains. "[Other schools] rush students through."

It's clear Andersen has life in order at this point. His tenacity and determination are obvious in that he already has a hands-on electronic equipment internship working



"I like the program here," Andersen says. "I relate to [instructors] Lee and Scott – they understand how I want to get involved and learn. They're also willing to talk with me about school and life."

at Frontier Ag and Turf in Osceola, Wis., a year before it's required as part of the program. And his confidence is apparent as he works around the power equipment lab on campus.

His short-term goals are to maintain a good grade point average and graduate from WITC in the spring of 2015. Eventually he plans to pursue a John Deere master technician designation. "I

set my goals and achieve them," he says. "If necessary, I reset them."

Goals. Determination. Confidence. Three strong qualities a future employer will find attractive in the future. But at this point, Andersen's content to be back in Wisconsin, learning in a program and internship he finds rewarding ... and destined to be another successful WITC grad.

Agricultural Power and Equipment Technician

The agricultural power and equipment technician program consists of practical knowledge and shop management skills to help students master installation, service, assembly, adjustment, repair and operation of various types of machinery and tractors. Students will also learn how to work with hydraulics, transmissions, electrical systems and air conditioning.

For more information about the agriculture power and equipment technician program, **visit witc.edu/programs**.