

YTI's hands-on training preps students for careers

From YTI Career Institute

When Nicole Stotler enrolled at YTI Career Institute in the Respiratory Therapy program, she was seeking an opportunity to grow beyond her role as a phlebotomist at UPMC Altoona.

Working second shift and caring for two young children, Stotler knew she'd be juggling a heavy load to go back to school.

"I think education is important," Stotler, 36, said. "(Many people) get in a cycle of a dead-end job, and I wanted to do better for myself, not do the same thing for the rest of my life."

Stotler is one of more than 180 students currently enrolled at YTI's campus in Altoona, receiving hands-on career training in the medical, business, computer and criminal justice fields. Students come from a broad array of backgrounds, life experiences and work experiences, including veterans and nontraditional students seeking a career change, and recent high-school graduates.

Above all, YTI emphasizes preparing students for their chosen career.

"We work very closely with our employers so that we meet their entry-level expectations," said Vicki Kane, associate director of education. "Courses are directly designed to prepare students specifically for their career path."

Several programs offer an externship, where students gain industry experience by working in a professional environment for part of their education. When Stotler graduates in May, she'll have completed five externship experiences.

In addition to the classroom and clinical experience, YTI also teaches the soft skills sought by employers, from a strong work ethic to the ability to get along with others.

"You might be studying to



Courtesy photo

YTI Altoona Dental Assisting instructor Missy Gibney (left) and Dental Assisting student Jenna Smith of Clearfield perform a composite filling in the dental lab at YTI Career Institute in Altoona.

become a dental assistant, but you're also going to be an employee," said Missy Gibney, an instructor in the Dental Assisting program. "We try to put those expectations to practice in the classroom, like holding students accountable if they are late."

A closer look

Location: 2900 Fairway Drive, Altoona

Phone: 814-944-5643

Online: www.yti.edu/campuses/altoona.asp

Programs: Business administration, computer systems technician, criminal justice & first response, dental assisting, medical assistant, medical billing and coding, respiratory therapy

With a few weeks left before graduation, Stotler is preparing for the test she'll need to pass to become a registered respiratory therapist. On Wednesday afternoons, she stays on campus to review practice questions with a clinical instructor and other RT students.

"When it feels like you can't go on, you somehow keep going," Stotler said,

adding that her family has also been a huge support. "It's not impossible. It can be done."

The combined focus on professional development and industry-modeled learning has been key at YTI Career Institute since it opened in Altoona in 2006. As leadership looks toward the future, the school strives to develop and evolve along with the community.

"One of our great strengths is being able to adapt to what employers are looking for," Kane said.

YTI holds advisory board meetings twice a year to hear from local employers on new industry trends, technology and practices. Employers also provide feedback on curriculum for the school's seven programs, which range in length from nine to 21 months, and instructors often pull in their industry experience in the classroom.

"Not everybody wants a college setting; they want something with a relatively quick turnaround," Kane said. "They want their time well-spent, and it's important that they see the relevance in what they're learning."

Navigating the College Admissions Process with Your College-Bound Child

By Heather Ricker-Gilbert, D.Ed

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Navigation is the best word I can think of to describe the role of parents in helping their children through the sea of information surrounding the college admissions process. The sailing is not always smooth and the waters are often untested. At the same time, lessons in self-understanding along with new adventures are part of this experience. The seas can be rough, but hopefully the trip is rewarding.

Now is the time when the parents of sophomores and juniors are beginning to think about what lies ahead for their children after high school. As an educator and a consultant specializing in college admissions services, I offer parents five suggestions for helping their child navigate this very special time in their lives...the college selection and admissions process:

1. Be informed

There are hundreds of great institutions out there: private liberal arts colleges, conservatories, private and public research universities, specialized and technical schools. Go online to individual college websites and investigate what they offer in size, majors, location, career development, and faculty. Also, check out the Net Price Calculator on every college site to roughly determine what your Expected Family Contribution toward tuition might be. There are plenty of informative websites such as: www.fairtest.org which lists test optional schools, www.publicuniversityhonors.com, information on honors programs, www.finaid.org site that explains various financial aid programs, www.unigo.com scholarship information, www.ctcl.org Colleges That Change Lives site. Among the books I often recommend are: *College Bound and Gagged: How to Help Your Kid Get into a Great College Without losing your Savings, Your Relationship or Your Mind*, by Nancy Berk; and *College Admissions Together: It Takes a Family*, by Steven Goodman and Andrea Leiman. The more informed you are, the more you can help your child be realistic and positive about the college admissions process.

2. Don't Take Over

Try not to be consumed by the college admissions process, or become addicted to reading comments on such websites as www.CollegeConfidential.com. You are not applying to college, your child is! Watch your choice of words! This is not "our" college search. Don't make phone calls, set up appointments for interviews or be too demanding of admissions personnel. At a recent visit I made to Bates College in Maine,

a savvy admissions officer said, at the end of his formal presentation, that he would only take questions from students in the audience, not their parents. Not surprisingly, the student response was far greater when mom and dad had to keep quiet.

3. Communicate and Listen. Occasionally Offer Advice.

It is important for parents to encourage good time management skills and make sure the college applicant in their family meets standardized testing and application deadlines. It is also important to talk about parameters or restrictions at the beginning of the process. Are there geographic, religious, or financial considerations which should be discussed prior to a student researching and applying to colleges? In other words, after your son or daughter is accepted to The University of Washington in Seattle, is not the time to state that you will only pay for one plane ticket home a year.

Communicate honestly, listen quietly, and stay awake, since we all know teenagers start talking late at night. Help your child assess what he is seeing, researching, discovering, and evaluating.

4. Don't Make Decisions for Your Child

Your child needs to determine what is the right "fit" or "match" for him or her based on personality, abilities and academic interests. Just because you had a good experience at your alma mater does not mean he will. Just because you always wanted her to go to one of the "little ivies" or to a business college does not mean that they are the best choice for your child. Although consultation is important, the final decision about which colleges to apply to and possibly attend needs to be the applicant's decision. If your child makes the choice he or she will more likely to be happy with it. As Washington Post columnist, Jay Mathews writes in his book *Harvard Schmarvance* "Recognize that it is your child's college experience that matters, not yours, even if you are paying for it!"

5. Celebrate No Matter What!

Be positive, encouraging and proud of whatever the outcome may be of the college application and selection process. There is no one perfect school and most young people could be happy at several different institutions. You have all navigated well, so enjoy the outcome and look forward to sending your child off to the world of higher education with support and confidence. Happy Sailing!

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WHY MONTESSORI?

Montessori education offers our children opportunities to develop their potential as they step out into the world as engaged, competent, responsible, and respectful citizens with an understanding and appreciation that learning is for life. Maria Montessori, Italian physician and educator best known for the philosophy of education that bears her name stated, "The goal of early childhood education should be to activate the child's own



natural desire to learn." In a Montessori environment:

- **Each child is valued as a unique individual.** Montessori education recognizes that children learn in different ways, and accommodates all learning styles. Students are also free to learn at their own pace, each advancing through the curriculum as he is ready, guided by the teacher and an individualized learning plan.

- **Beginning at an early age, Montessori students develop order, coordination, concentration, and independence.** Classroom design, materials, and daily routines support the individual's emerging "self-regulation" (ability to educate one's self, and to think about what one is learning), toddlers through adolescents.

- **Students are part of a close, caring community.** The multi-age classroom—typically spanning 3 years—re-creates a family structure. Older students enjoy stature as mentors and role models; younger children feel supported and gain confidence about the challenges ahead. Teachers model respect, loving kindness, and a belief in peaceful conflict resolution.

- **Montessori students enjoy freedom within limits.** Working within parameters set by their teachers, students are active

participants in deciding what their focus of learning will be. Montessorians understand that internal satisfaction drives the child's curiosity and interest and results in joyous learning that is sustainable over a lifetime.

- **Students are supported in becoming active seekers of knowledge.** Teachers provide environments where students have the freedom and the tools to pursue answers to their own questions.

- **Self-correction and self-assessment are an integral part of the Montessori classroom approach.** As they mature, students learn to look critically at their work, and become adept at recognizing, correcting, and learning from their errors.

Given the freedom and support to question, to probe deeply, and to make connections, Montessori students become confident, enthusiastic, self-directed learners. They are able to think critically, work collaboratively, and act boldly—a skill set for the 21st century.



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