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Ryan Kahl

For the past two years, Ryan Kahl has left his home north of Grants Pass at 7 a.m. and driven an hour to the Rogue Community College Table Rock Campus in White City to study diesel technology.

He returns home at about 11 p.m., having traveled 100 miles roundtrip. Now his dedication is paying off. Kahl will soon complete work on an Associate of Applied Science degree in diesel technology, and he's already been hired as a technician for Cummins Diesel in Medford.

"I'm very glad I did it," said Kahl, who earned a 3.85 grade point average. Kahl, 35, fulfilled a Cooperative Work Experience (CWE) requirement at Cummins Diesel, which allowed him to get hands-on experience while earning college credit.

Bob Anderson, Cummins operations manager, said CWE gives employers a chance to size up not only students' abilities but also their character and how they get along with other people.

"It gives me an insight into how the college is preparing people. In Ryan's case, he came well prepared," said Anderson, who has hired other RCC grads in the past. "First off, we look for a good work ethic," he noted, adding that strong writing and math abilities are also critical and that Kahl met all those criteria.

Diesel technology is rapidly changing, especially emission controls, and technicians need strong learning skills, according to Anderson. Tasha Kahl, Ryan's wife of nine years, says she's glad about the job he's been offered at Cummins. "I'm relieved he has more stable work instead of moving from mill to mill," she said. "But first and foremost, it sets a good example about education for our kids," who are ages 3, 6, and 8. The Kahls live in Wolf Creek on a 200-acre ranch where Ryan grew up. He graduated in 1993 from North Valley High School



and lost three jobs in six years to plant layoffs and closures. After losing a millwright position in 2009, he came to RCC to explore career options. Armed with funding through the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Kahl's goal was to build a family-supporting career that held a degree of long-range security.

When he scored high on aptitude tests for hands-on professions, Kahl's advisor steered him toward diesel technology. It's been a fine fit, he said.

Kemp Pheley, RCC Diesel Technology coordinator, has been "helpful, supportive and patient," Kahl said. RCC students can opt for a one-year diesel specialist certificate or earn an Associate of Applied Science degree.



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