



Former steel worker is flying high in new career

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WOOD RIVER — When U.S. Steel in Granite City laid off Nicholas LaRue more than two years ago he was determined to make a change.

Although it came as a shock at first for the husband and father of two, LaRue was unsure how he would support his family. LaRue decided not to let his circumstances define him, but to define his circumstances.

Following a rapid response meeting with Madison County Employment and Training, LaRue learned about various types of assistance that was available.

Discussions with his career specialist and his fascination with aircraft, LaRue made a decision that he would pursue aviation maintenance technology at Southwestern Illinois College.

“I’ve always enjoyed working with my hands repairing, maintaining and servicing equipment,” LaRue said.

The program at SWIC is a Federal Aviation Administration approved program that offers hands on experiences with airplanes, helicopters and aircraft power plants.

While in school, LaRue supplemented his income with delivering pizzas and once he was called back to work at U.S. Steel, he declined.

“I was more excited about the job opportunities offered by my internship and obtaining my degree,” he said.

LaRue graduated in May. He was hired by Cape Airlines in St. Louis, where he completed his internship.

LaRue admits the initial pay was a little less, but he's more satisfied by doing what he does now and the bonus is he and his family are getting to enjoy some flight benefits too.