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HACR spells jobs and a \$90,000 investment for students at YTI

By LAUREN BOYER Daily Record/Sunday News 10/08/2012 - 11:21 AM EDT

Joshua Suggs doesn't fit the stereotype of a typical trade school student.

He is 34 years old.

He has a bachelor's degree in history from Colgate University and a short-lived teaching career on his resume.

A few years ago - after bouncing around from warehouse job to warehouse job - something clicked after a recent layoff.

"I knew that was a possibility," said Suggs of Hummelstown, Dauphin County. "I looked around and thought, 'What could I do?'"

That's when he found YTI and a trade could be more than hot and cold about.

It's called HACR. It's pronounced "hacker." The program, which started at YTI in 1992, is short for Heating Air Conditioning and Refrigeration.

"We're always going to need it," said Suggs, who graduates in November. Today, he's getting work experience at Remco, a Mechanicsburg company that works on refrigeration systems for major grocery stores, including Walmart and Giant.

"It's human nature that we enjoy our comfort," he added. "It's something that can't be outsourced."

This year, the school invested \$90,000 in renovating the HACR lab at the school's Springettsbury Township campus to include a climate controlled house and 90 percent new equipment.

Why?

For those who graduated from YTI's HACR program from October 2008 to September 2009, about 85 percent received jobs in the field, doing anything from fixing refrigerators in grocery stores to repairing furnaces.

And the need for these types of services are expected to increase.

A state Department of Labor and Industry statistic that predicts a 35 percent increase in HVAC jobs, said Gregory Williams, the school's director for education for technical careers.

Concern for the environment is expected to force homes and businesses to replace older systems with geothermal units, which draws on heat retained within the earth, to solar panels.

"The older population is coming back to get retrained in those new systems," Williams said. The short-term diploma program, just one-year long, also provides assurance in today's economy, said Carla Horn, campus president.

"You get in, you get out, you get employed," she said. That's what attracted Tash Sabriyev. The 24-year-old

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Springettsbury Township man said he "needed something fast" after moving to the United States from Russia seven years ago.

He was working at a pizza shop before entering the HACR program at YTI.

"People are always going to need their fridged foods," he said.

But the reinvestment doesn't just apply to the HACR program.

As YTI turns 45 this year, there's a need to reinvest in all types of technical careers as many public high school programs suffer from funding cuts and can't accommodate the influx of interested students.

For example, the Harrisburg School District closed its Career Technology Academy in summer 2011, leaving about 300 students to find education elsewhere, said Williams, who worked at the school before coming to YTI.

"The opportunities at the high school level are being diminished because of funding cuts for particular career programs," Horn said. "It's validation that the interest is there ... If students are being turned down, we might be able to get them at a post-secondary level."

TIMELINE

The five-campus school turns 45 this year. Here's a timeline of how it evolved:

1967: York Technical Institute was established when local businessmen in York started a co-educational training institution on Richland Avenue to train entry-level draftsmen.

1985: The institute expanded its offerings with business programs in response to market research that showed the York area had viable employment needs in these fields.

1992: Additional space was leased in the Cyber Center on Pennsylvania Avenue in York to offer a program in heating, air conditioning and refrigeration technology at the site. The institute purchased 13 acres on Williams Road in Springettsbury Township.

1995: The institute moved into its new building where the York campus is currently located.

2006: York Technical Institute becomes YTI Career Institute in a re-branding effort as the school opens other campuses in Altoona and Mechanicsburg, which was renamed YTI-Capital Region.

2007: YTI opened the Motorcycle Technology Center, a 15,000-square-foot facility at 52 Grumbacher Road to accommodate its growing motorsports technology program. The MTC is a brand of YTI-York.



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