Chris Brooks graduated from SCTD’s Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration (HVAC-R) program in September. Chris completed an externship at Harshaw Trane, where he is now a full-time HVAC-R technician. The company hired Chris in March of 2011, approximately 6 months before he graduated. In this interview, Chris reflects on his preparation for and entry into his new career.

Techniques: What is your workday like?

Chris: Busy! After 14 years in factory work, what I do is a welcome change. On Mondays, I spend time in the shop, planning the rest of the workweek, gathering parts, tools and equipment. The rest of the time, I am out there doing the work. I have spent most of this week, for example, working on equipment at Horseshoe Casino. The work varies every day. I really like the constant change and the mobility.

Techniques: How has your externship and your job at Harshaw Trane helped you pull together what you learned in the HVAC-R program at SCTD?

Chris: Oh, man! A lot of ways – everything I do, I think, “I’ve heard this, I’ve seen this, I know this.” I am still pulling it all together, but I actually keep some of my textbooks, Air and Water Distribution, HVAC-R Fundamentals, Modern Refrigeration, in my truck. My first few months at Harshaw Trane I was terrified about what was expected of me, and I am still learning, but I was ready, I was well prepared.

Techniques: Why did you choose the HVAC-R field?

Chris: I spent those 14 years I mentioned in a chemical plant doing factory work, and then I got laid off. I have a family, kids, so I was looking for a career field that would be solid and stable. I wanted security. I looked at becoming an electrician, and I looked at the IT field, but I wanted to be out there, doing a lot of different things, combining a lot of trades. HVAC-R offered what I was looking for.

Techniques: Are you satisfied with your choice?

Chris: Definitely. I am very satisfied with my chosen career.

Techniques: Why did you decide to attend SCTD?

Chris: First, the school’s presentation – the way the campus looked, like people cared about it. Then there were the factors of the hands-on externship that was a part of the program and the career services job placement assistance.

Techniques: Are you satisfied with what SCTD provided?

Chris: Definitely. The HVAC-R field is huge. I remember when I interviewed at Harshaw Trane. My interviewer said he didn’t think anyone really could ever have a complete knowledge or understanding of the whole industry. But, like I said, my program covered a lot, and on the job, when I see something, I remember it.

Techniques: What does the future hold for you?

Chris: I love what I’m doing. If I have anything to say about it, I will stay with Harshaw Trane until I retire. I hope to grow with the company. I see a pathway for me there – technicians become senior technicians, who then become managers.

Techniques: What advice would you offer to people who are considering a career in HVAC-R?

Chris: Well … the field requires a certain amount of mechanical aptitude. You have to enjoy working with your hands. Then there’s the math and science. Take all the math and physics you can. I use math every day as well as physics principles. So take the math classes and sharpen those skills. Then just go for it!