



Alumni Spotlight: Meet Wes Wood and Shell Puget Sound Refinery



Shell PSR positions are hyper competitive, but after a few attempts, Wes Wood was hired as a process operator this past July. "Honestly, SVC was great on the resume. It showed [my employers] that I was committed to what I wanted by dedicating two years to bettering myself," Wes reflected. The technical school education helped him stand out.

This was just the first step in a string of good news for Wes, however. After only seven months on

For Wes Wood, the journey to achieving his dream was anything but a straight path. Since his days at Sedro-Woolley High School, Wes wanted to become a firefighter, which heavily influenced his higher education destination. The choice was easy, "Numerous people recommended the Skagit program."

The program Wood refers to is the two-year Fire Sciences program – a great tool that allowed Wes to pair classroom knowledge with his field experience as a volunteer firefighter. As a volunteer, Wood was pulling double duty, serving part-time for both the Sedro-Woolley Fire Department and North County Fire in Stanwood. But after two years, the toll was weighing on Wes and his family. Part-time work and uncertain schedules made it challenging to establish his career. For the benefit of his then-girlfriend/now-wife, Wes took a job as a train conductor. The dream was on hold for five years.

But Wes kept chasing his dream. Shell's Puget Sound Refinery (PSR) in Anacortes, Washington was a company with whom Wes knew a number of employees. "They all said it was a great job with great benefits...I knew it had great people." Their living wage jobs, for both hourly and staff employees, would directly improve the quality of life Wes could afford his family.

the job, he was given the opportunity to join the refinery's emergency response team - a position that supplements his original duties with emergency response and safety responsibilities for the employees and facilities associated with the PSR. Wes is able to help people and keep them safe. The dream happened for somebody committed to hard work and who never lost sight of his end goal.

When asked about any advice he'd give to Skagit Valley College students, his message was clear – keep working because there is no set path to where you want to go. "Figure out what you want to do and keep working towards it...keep going and don't give up on it. It took me eight years to get what I wanted. It'll happen."

Shell's commitment to Skagit Valley College extends well beyond hiring our graduates. For more than 20 years, SVC has enjoyed a strong relationship with Shell PSR and their employees. "We are so appreciative to Shell for joining the College's commitment to higher education and service to the community," said Anne Clark, Vice President of College Advancement. "Since 1999 alone, they have contributed over \$215,000 in support of student success! They continue to greatly impact the lives of students and we are so grateful for their leadership and vision."