



Human Energy™

Perseverance Pays Off for Chevron Plant Operator



Chevron ROP trainer Butter Simms with ROP graduate Stacey Reynolds.

Fourteen years ago, Stacey Reynolds was in desperate straits. She had two small children, an ailing mother and no place to live. "We were staying with my son's father temporarily, but his landlord was threatening eviction, so we had to move out," said Stacey.

Afraid she was about to lose everything, Stacey found a shelter willing to provide transitional housing and help her rebuild her life. "I married early and didn't graduate high school, so they helped me finish school," she explained. "Meanwhile, I worked several jobs, including the shelter's kitchen and various night and weekend jobs."

Fortune again shone on Stacey when a friend shared an article about the Contra Costa County Office of Education's Regional Occupational Program (ROP), which provides career-development courses to more than 13,000 students and adults each year. "That little piece of paper changed my whole existence," Stacey said.

"I grew up near an oil refinery in Martinez, so I was always interested in learning more about that kind of work," she continued. "When I saw ROP's Process Plant Operator course, which trains you for entry-level refinery positions, I knew it was for me."

For the past 32 years, Chevron has funded and provided instructors and other resources for the Process Plant Operator course. Before being enrolled, Stacey was extensively screened to ensure her aptitude and goals were compatible with the course. She spent the next 18 months juggling motherhood, school, part-time jobs and the rigorous ROP training. On top of that, her mother had suffered a stroke and was confined to an elder care facility.

After completing the ROP coursework, Stacey underwent two weeks of intensive tests, which she passed. Then, in a sad - yet uplifting - twist of fate, Stacey learned she got the job at Chevron and visited her mother to share the good news; that very night, her mother died. "I think she was holding on until she knew her daughter would be okay," shared Stacey.

Fast-forward 13 years and Stacey is happily employed as a power plant distribution operator. "Basically, I help supply the electricity, gas, water and steam used by the various Richmond Refinery plants to manufacture their products," she explained. "I monitor the safe distribution of these power sources, which might involve 'walking the lines,' opening and closing all kinds of supply valves and working with maintenance staff to ensure all my equipment is operating reliably."

Stacey can't praise ROP - or Chevron - highly enough. "I don't think anyone could ever realize how important this job is to me. It has provided me with steady employment, health and retirement benefits and a stable environment to raise my kids," she shared. "My daughter is working on a Ph.D. in education, and my son is pursuing a master's degree in art. I couldn't be more proud - both of them and myself - for getting this far!"

To learn more about ROP, visit <http://www.cccoe.k12.ca.us/stsvcs/rop> or call the ROP Course Hotline at (925) 942-3436.