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# HVAC TECHNICIAN – A CAREER FOR ALL SEASONS

Did you know that the Heating Ventilation Air Conditioning (HVAC) industry offers one of the hottest areas of growth for newcomers? Technicians in this high-demand occupation repair, maintain, and install heating, air-conditioning and refrigeration systems. These service professionals are also responsible for heating, cooling, and air quality in residential homes and businesses.

According to Pennsylvania's Department of Labor and Industry, employment in the industry is expected to grow over 10% in Montgomery County and over 15 percent nationally. Salaries are good too, as the local median salary for experienced technicians is usually around \$56,000.00 but can exceed well above \$75,000.00.

The HVAC field offers an opportunity to utilize a number of technical skills, many of which are STEM related. A local employer and partner of North Montco Technical Career Center, Chris Walton (Clyde S. Walton, Inc.) points out that the field is constantly evolving. "Technicians do well with a technology and mechanical interest and background. He continues, "Today I-

Pads and I-Phones can be used to diagnose system issues and problems. More importantly, people should know that the trades, especially the HVAC field is not a dead end job. There is always growth potential."

To help prepare students for these opportunities, North Montco's teacher, David McCauley and evening instructor, Leon Angelichio teach both theory and a strong hands-on component. McCauley says that active learners will do well in this profession if they utilize both theory and hands-on knowledge in their work. As an important part of his training curriculum, McCauley puts an emphasis on safety standards and practices.

Angelichio illustrates how customer service skills make a difference. "While specific technical skills are important in class, there are some personal traits that can allow an individual to excel in the HVAC field. A drive to work varied hours and in various environments is critical to success. Our trade is 24/7/365. Heating and air conditioning equipment does not fail on a schedule. We often meet customers who are not having their best day and are under

a bit of stress. An individual who is empathetic with a desire to help someone who is experiencing the stress of a failed household component that might require a costly repair or replacement is essential."

Who should consider an HVAC career? Angelichio, states, "All types of students can excel in the HVAC field. It is important, however, to note that individuals that are strong in math skills tend to do well. The field requires constant use of basic math skills as we rely heavily on basic equations to help understand when heating and cooling appliances are functioning properly and efficiently."

Brenden Lanahan, completed North Montco's HVAC program in 2019, believes his training was a worthwhile experience. "I wasn't planning on going to college, but wanted an opportunity for some on-the-job experience. During my time at North Montco, I began to establish a work history with Clyde S. Walton, Inc. and a mentorship with my instructor. This was a great way to get your foot in the door."

*(Continued on page 56)*

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## HVAC TECHNICIAN

(Continued from page 55)

Angelichio says, "Once students complete the basic heat and air conditioning course, our students are well positioned to begin employment as an apprentice with a residential or light commercial HVAC company. They will have a strong foundation that they can build on, as most students will be able to complete basic preventative maintenance on small oil and gas fired equipment. Students will also be able to complete basic preventative maintenance." "As in most trades, credentials add value," says McCauley. "We work with students to get their 608 Refrigerant license. This licensing allows technicians to work on Freon systems, and is a qualification for the apprentice journeymen level."

Lanahan comments, "HVAC training is unique in that you learn a little about many different fields, which has been helpful in learning to think outside the trade. While working on other projects, you learn the skill of thinking through the sequence of operations or troubleshooting." McCauley explains that the HVAC technician will become familiar with some electrical, plumbing, and air quality systems as part of their training and experience. "Once students find em-

ployment, employers may require they do a combination of service and installation," says McCauley. "This mix can help employers evaluate new employee's strengths as well as help the employee develop their interests." Walton agrees, as this career path includes helpers, apprentices, installers, master technicians, supervisory and sales for those inclined.

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Other continuing education courses are available at North Montco Technical Career Center. With multiple programs offered in six high-demand occupation sectors, you can increase workplace skills and earn the certifications employers want most: Construction Trades, Culinary Arts, Engineering, Manufacturing, Health Careers, Driver's Education and Commercial Driver License (CDL). Key components to training in all of our programs reflect current industry trends and advances in technology. Partnerships with business and industry, manufacturing and schools have kept our programs state of the art to meet the demands of local employers.

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