



It's like a Dream Come True

Kate Folmar

PIA 2011 Pittsburgh Campus, PA
Program Aviation Maintenance Technology (AMT)
Length 21 Months
Employment ... Pratt & Whitney
Position Research and Development Mechanic

Living the aviation dream is something Kate Folmar has longed for. Some would say she's already achieved that goal, and while she loves her job, she is still working and striving for more.

The Altoona, PA, native fell in love with PIA after her first visit to the Pittsburgh campus.

"When I got there and saw actual planes in the hangar, both my dad and I were blown away," Kate said. "There was a paint booth, a sheet metal shop, an electronics shop, engines everywhere – you name it. With my mechanics background, I knew this was perfect for me."

A month before graduating and earning her FAA Airframe and Powerplant license in 2011, Kate accepted a job with Pratt & Whitney, a company she had her sights set on. She now works at their West Palm Beach, FL, location as a Research and Development (R&D) Mechanic. The shop, which holds up to 10 engines, is on an 85,000 acre plant site in the everglades.

"I always knew I wanted to work in aviation. It's the best," Kate said. "I could get thrown into anything. Next to NASA, this [Pratt & Whitney] was the only company I wanted to work for. This is where jet engines get built, this is R&D for the entire company – you can't beat it. There are rocket engines getting wheeled around, we're working on black ops – it's like a dream come true."

With an ultimate goal to be an engineer, Kate decided to first gain a technical skill. She didn't want to "jump into" a university and believes a good technician is something a company will never turn down.

Today, Kate is pursuing an engineering degree from Embry Riddle Aeronautical University. Pratt & Whitney



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not only pays for her degree, but she is also allowed three paid hours off a week to complete schoolwork.

"It's one thing to be an engineer, but to actually be able to do it with your own hands is even better," Kate said. "Learning a trade is the most valuable thing I've done for my career. With an A&P you learn so many trades in one. You're such a well-rounded technician, and companies will want to hire you because of it."

Kate's PIA education has helped her tremendously with her engineering studies. Subjects like thermodynamics are easier for her to conceptualize because of her invaluable past experiences with PIA. Kate also believes the absolute best engineers have a mechanics background.

"To be a good engineer, you have to go to a good tech school first, and everyone in this industry would agree," Kate said.

