



# Getting tattoo prompts Faith to pursue career in health care

By Andrea Fencil  
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**W**AUKESHA — Although tattoos aren't commonly seen in the medical field, Waukesha County Technical College student Richard Faith, 46, didn't let that stop him from fulfilling his goal to help others.

In the spring of 2014, Faith found himself at an economic crossroads in his life.

"I knew I had to do something different, but I didn't know what that was at the time," Faith said.

When Faith went to get his hand tattooed, he discovered his tattoo artist had decided out of the blue to quit her previous job to pursue a tattooing career.

"Hearing her story made me think now is the time if you don't seize the moment you won't be doing anything different than what you're doing," Faith said. "She inspired me to make a change."

So Faith began looking into health care programs at WCTC. His desire to enter the medical field to help people originally lead Faith to look into nursing, but after researching the dress code for nurses, Faith decided it wasn't an option because of the tattoos on his arms and hands.

"Surgical technology looked good because 100 percent is covered by gloves and clothes and face mask," Faith said. "My impact on the individual's health was immediate, so it seemed like it would be the quickest way to help people and be more involved in their care process in a more direct way."

And with a strong stomach, Faith said it was the

right move for him.

"I graduate next month and it's been successful the whole way through," Faith said.

## Overcoming challenges

Faith had difficulty passing the skills tests in the lab that surgical technologists need to be proficient in, but Surgical Technology instructor Carrie Galecke worked with Faith one-on-one to help him.

"I struggled initially when I got into the surgical technology program. You have three tests and if you don't pass you get booted out of the program," Faith said. "In the lab it's not entirely real. The patient is a mannequin and you can tell it's fake so it was really difficult for me at that point."

"If she hadn't gone through, worked with me one on one, I wouldn't be graduating next month," Faith said. "I'm proud of that and of her helping me through that process because if it wasn't for her taking that extra time to help me I wouldn't have made it this far through the program."

On top of tests, Faith said managing time for school and family can be difficult at times.

"Being a husband and a parent, in addition to an employee, sometimes working two jobs, while going to school full time — the whole managing of time and getting projects done and juggling it with my current schedule was a big challenge," Faith said. "Trying to maintain somewhat of a normal home life when my face is in a book, not trying to ignore my kids while keeping high grades — I'm really proud of the fact I



Submitted photos

Richard Faith, 46, returned to school following an inspiring tattoo appointment.

have a 3.6 something or another GPA, and the fact I was able to maintain that while working a couple jobs and having a family. It was something I obviously figured out, not quite sure how, but I've done it."

On top of his busy schedule, Faith is also president of Scrub Club, the club for his program, and he is the district ambassador for WCTC.

"It helped me with time management and prioritizing my time. Those aren't necessarily lessons I would have learned if I was a student in other aspects of life," Faith said.

"Some of the instrument trays have over 100 instruments in them. They come disorganized and you have to organize them so when the surgeon asks for it, you can just grab it and hand it to them. I've become a little particular about things or how they're set up or done. It's helped me be more orderly. I think it's given my whole life a little more direction/clarity/organization."

Faith also sponsors a child through a non-governmental organization called Mayan Families in Guatemala. He began working with the organization in January 2016. He then traveled to Guatemala in August 2016 and plans to go again this August.

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Faith stands with his son JT (left) and a Guatemalan boy named Alex (center). "I met him in January of 2016 and we ran into him while on a trip to Guatemala in August of 2016. We spent a couple of days with him. He is a great kid who is severely malnourished and in great need of many things," Faith said. Faith began sponsoring a child through a non-governmental organization called Mayan Families in Guatemala in January 2016.



Richard Faith enjoys playing drums along with mountain biking. Faith said he used to enjoy skateboarding before he entered the surgical technology program, but because he can't hurt his hands he gave it up.

# Faith

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“A lot of my time is spent that way, it’s a labor of love,” Faith said. “It’s more about helping others, going to a beautiful country and doing stuff down there that’s unique to that country and different to what we can do here in the states.”

## Future plans

Faith wants to work a few years as a surgical technician before furthering his education.

“The first years I work as a tech, I want to focus on that and get myself grounded in a solid routine,” Faith said. “I want to get a master’s degree so I can learn and teach this program and the experiences I’ve had.”

After such a busy schedule, Faith finds the future a little daunting.

“I really enjoyed the process, but I think I’m going to miss school. There’s a part of me that’s a little fearful — fearful of not being busy I’ve learned that I really have a thirst for knowledge and I’m going to have to find a different avenue to obtain that knowledge now,” Faith said.

“It’s the end of a chapter and the fear of the unknown. Usually those things that make us uncomfortable give us the best learning opportunities to grow as a person. I know that’ll come with it but it doesn’t mean I’m not somewhat scared by it.”

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