



Alaska Student and Graduate Profile

When Allen Sagoonick decided to pursue a career in IT (information technology) he wanted to find a program and school that would provide him with the same level of challenge and satisfaction he has experienced by serving his country and community for most of his adult life. His commitment to duty has included enlisting in the Alaska National Guard, joining the United States Marine Corps, and working as a local police officer for eight years.

Allen began his journey into IT when he crashed a computer he had recently purchased, then repaired it himself without any previous computer training or technical support. Once Allen discovered that he had a knack for technology, he began researching education and training programs and found the IT field to be full of opportunities. In his usual disciplined manner, Allen conducted an exhaustive search and selected the Alaska Vocational Technical Center (AVTEC) as his school of choice where he enrolled in the Cisco® Networking Academy Certified Network Associate (CCNA®) course. As Allen notes, “I wasn’t looking for just any school, I was looking for the best school, and AVTEC was the only one that was certified by everyone and his brother.”

Selecting AVTEC and the Networking Academy® has definitely paid off for Allen and others. In fact, 14 of the 16 students in his graduating class were hired two weeks before they graduated. Allen attributes his and the other students’ success to their instructor, Mark Ganser. In Allen’s words, the high employment rate among graduates “shows you how good Mark is. ... He has a lot of success stories.” Allen can’t say enough good things about Mark, who has a deep understanding of networking, and was able “to explain something seven different ways to get through to different people” until it made sense.

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Mark brushes off the praise, saying that Allen would be successful at anything he chose to do. From Mark’s standpoint, “What sets Allen apart from many others is that he recognizes the responsibility that comes with success: the responsibility to contribute something. Allen actively encourages others from the Northwest Region of Alaska to pursue careers in IT and provides a role model young people can relate to.” Mark adds, “Because of Allen’s encouragement, several other students from the northwest region have attended AVTEC’s program and then returned to Northwestern Alaska to begin their careers.”

Allen is an Inupiat Eskimo who attributes his success to listening to his elders. They taught him to be patient, and to take incremental steps toward a long-term goal. Some of his success is also due to having “a mind like a sponge and a steel trap—I absorb a lot and don’t let it go.” His energy, drive, and positive attitude must also have been factors. While he was enrolled in the academy Allen was balancing being a father to three active children, serving as president of AVTEC’s Student Council, mentoring a troubled youth, and serving in the Alaska National Guard.

Allen is currently employed at Kawerak, Inc., a non-profit corporation that provides education, housing, natural resource management, and economic development services to residents throughout the Bering Strait region. Through his job at Kawerak, Allen is able to continue his focus on giving back. Although he is not literally in the line of fire as an Information Systems Tech at Kawerak, he has faced his share of challenges on the job, including a rigorous travel schedule that was necessary when he was setting up the LAN, MAN, WAN, and providing PC support for a large geographic area roughly the size of the state of Iowa. Having completed the initial set-up, Allen is now responsible for upgrades and ongoing maintenance of the network.

Besides his work at Kawerak, Inc., Allen provides technical support on a contract basis to other organizations in the area. In fact, he is considering starting his own business and is in the process of preparing his business plan. But Allen is not all work and no play. He makes time for personal interests such as hunting, fishing, and reading, and helps his children with special

projects for school or for fun. Between his natural ability to troubleshoot and his personal motto of “no problems, only solutions,” Allen has found his niche. He loves what he does and the quality of his work experience has exceeded his expectations.

His enthusiasm for information technology and networking may be contagious. Allen’s 17-year-old son appears to be leaning toward the IT field. Who knows, AVTEC may soon have a second generation Sagoonick.

When asked what advice he would give to others who may be interested in the Networking Academy, Allen says, “Go do it! It can only help you. Funding might be a problem, but after the Networking Academy you’ll get paid more. ... The benefits are far greater than the initial cost of paying for the program. ... Borrow the money if you have to. It’ll pay off.”

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For more information on the Networking Academy at AVTEC, visit: <http://avtec.labor.state.ak.us/>



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