BCCC graduate finds interesting career in aircraft inspections

HAVELOCK - In a workroom on a recent Wednesday at the Naval Air Depot, Beaufort County Community College graduate Amanda Hudspeth applied a green fluorescent gel to an aircraft part, and passed a wand over it.

The 23-year-old Belhaven native was demonstrating to visitors how she used gel and the device to check for cracks in metal aircraft parts.

As an apprentice inspector/evaluator in the non-destructive inspections, or NDI, division at the NADEP, Hudspeth is following a career path that calls for life and death decisions. And it could ultimately take her to military bases and hot spots around the world to help maintain and repair military aircraft. It's a career path that BCCC staff and faculty hope more women like Hudspeth will consider.

Sitting on some 145 acres at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, NADEP employs about 3,850 civilian workers, some 250 contractors, and 40 U.S. Marines in an industrial complex that includes more than 102 buildings with 1.8 million square feet of production space.

NADEP workers repair and maintain some 150 aircraft, 500 engines, and 45,000 aviation components each year, literally stripping the aircraft down to their skeletal hulls to recondition them to meet military specifications for another tour of duty.

The depot specializes in the support of Marine Corps aircraft, engines, and components and is the only source of repair within the continental United States for many jet engines and rotary wing engines.

"This is a great job," she said. "But not many people understand this trade because you have to go to an NDI school to learn how to do it."

Hudspeth, the daughter of Luke Cahoon and Joan Bogun of Belhaven, graduated from Northside High School in 1999. She earned an associate's degree from BCCC in mechanical engineering drafting and technology in 2003 and an associate's degree in mechanical engineering technology in 2004.

At the NADEP, she is one of two female apprentices in the NDI department and one of five females out of 48 people in the department.

As a young girl, Hudspeth always liked drafting and dreamed of becoming an architect. But when she arrived on the BCCC campus, she was reluctant to study mechanical engineering and drafting and initially turned down a scholarship for the program.

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