

HFI Scholarship Helps Maintenance Tech Get Industry Foothold

Gregory Gilliland was always mechanically inclined and loved working on cars throughout high school. After graduation, he decided to attend the aviation program of the Pennsylvania College of Technology in Williamsport.

While there, Gilliland interned at CJ Systems Aviation Group in West Mifflin, Pennsylvania, working in its Part 145 repair station under the supervision of licensed airframe and powerplant (A&P) technicians. He graduated from the Pennsylvania College of Technology in 2008 with a B.S. in aviation maintenance technology and a minor in management.

Gilliland wanted to pursue a career in helicopter maintenance, but his limited job experience made it difficult to land a position. He knew having factory training would give him invaluable experience and help in his job search. In 2008, he applied for and won the first-place award for the HFI Bill Sanderson Aviation Maintenance Technician Scholarship.

Gilliland's participation in the HAI Technical Committee led to a "tremendous experience ... [of] networking with maintenance managers from other facets of our industry."

With the scholarship money assisting with travel and lodging expenses, Gilliland was able to attend the maintenance factory course of his choice: the one for the Airbus AS350 B2. He chose to study maintenance for

radar endorsement. In addition to the AS350 B2 course, he has also attended the Eurocopter EC145 initial airframe course and Turbomeca's Arriel 1 line maintenance course.

In 2014, Gilliland graduated from



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HFI scholarship recipient Gregory Gilliland is now the lead technician on a Metro Aviation contract.

that model because of its widespread use and the corresponding plentiful job opportunities.

Gilliland considers himself a lifelong learner and has continued to pursue studies related to his career. He holds current FAA A&P ratings, an FAA inspection authorization, and an FCC general radiotelephone operator license with

helicopter industry. A side benefit to his participation in the committee "was the tremendous experience I gain from networking with maintenance managers from other facets of our industry."

When asked about his future plans, Gilliland said he will "continue working to gain experience as a manager and helicopter technician. In the future, I see myself working for a helicopter operator in a maintenance manager role."

In an industry where it can be hard for entry-level technicians to get a job, Gilliland says, "Never give up on your goals." Through hard work and dedication, anything is possible. 

Allison McKay is vice president of Helicopter Foundation International.

