MARK SCHNEIDER

Working with Networking:
From Forest Park to Yum

Graduate: Class of 1985   Occupation: Voice and Data Network Engineer Consultant
By Ryan Schneider , Spring, 2010

Just what does it take to make every single computer in an entire corporation work together like a well-oiled machine? It takes a well-functioning and well-maintained network. In today's workspace, maintenance and work on these networks-indispensable tools for any modern company-calls for the work of a network engineer. Mark Schneider, one of these people who keeps the networks working smoothly, works as a voice and data network engineer consultant. In his own words, he "works with the language of computers, how they talk to each other".

This 1985 graduate of Forest Park currently works for Yum Brands, the company that owns several fast food restaurants, including KFC and Taco Bell. He sets up and maintains various networks for the company. These networks connect a variety of computers all around the nation -- and the world -- for Yum. In his current job, he has to troubleshoot the networks if anything goes wrong, and hopefully fix the problem before it affects anyone. At the moment, he also has the job of standardizing the network connections between Yum's international offices and Yum's headquarters in Louisville. This can sometimes challenge him as he needs to understand more than just the United States' regulations; he also needs to know and follow the laws and regulations of the other countries with whom he works.

He had some interesting times in the early years after high school. Right after graduation, he spent a whole summer traveling the country on his motorcycle. In 1986 he joined the Air Force and served for twelve years. Although he did not fly planes, he did a job just as vital. Stationed all over the United States, from Las Vegas to Alaska, he refueled jets and other aircraft as a fuel technician. He also handled fuel orders-including one that went to Area 51! In 1996, he retrained in the military to become a communications specialist.

After he left the military, he worked at several other companies as a network engineer. Two of these were MPower, a telecommunications company, and UPS, the package service. At MPower, he even helped create the first commercially marketed network that used technology of VoIP, or Voice over Internet Protocol. This technology allows the transmitting of telephone calls through the Internet instead of a phone line. Services such as Skype and Vonage make extensive use of this

technology.

    Despite the difficulty of his work, he never had any college training. He discovered his interest in network engineering in high school. Much of his knowledge came from the military, where he received a four-month course on communications, which was equivalent to a two year degree from a trade school. A large part of his knowledge also came from reading entire shelves of books on networking. His high school career had quite a bit to teach him. "High school is a part of your life that teaches you how to get along, how do to deal with situations you have never dealt with before." For students currently in high school, he offers the following words: "The biggest advice I can have for someone in high school is that nothing is ever written in stone about your life. Your life is dependant on you."