

Robert Aguilar, Jr.



On being successful: "If you're not dedicated, you're not going to succeed. If you're dedicated, the sky is the limit. Don't expect to run the show when you first graduate, but if you work your way up, it's always a possibility."

—Robert Aguilar, Jr., June 12, 2009

Robert Aguilar, Jr., has been changing people's vision for eleven years. "I got into the beginning of Lasik eye surgery. Ten years ago, it was in its infancy. It was an amazing procedure, being in the O.R., assisting doctors in surgeries." But helping people see more clearly isn't all Robert does. He loves to help give people bright visions of their futures.

Robert began work on a four-year engineering degree but, like a lot of people, ran into financial and family issues. He went home to help his parents and started a construction company with his father. While there, he met his wife, who was studying at Texas State Technical College (TSTC). "I saw the brochure about laser electro-optics and thought, 'Wow! I like lasers!' I've always liked working with my hands." Robert decided to pursue an associate in applied science degree in laser electro-optics technology (LEOT) at TSTC. Just before he graduated, he was offered a job working with cutting-edge technology applications. "A company called LaserVision Centers picked me up for my laser background. They worked with lasers that perform Lasik eye surgery."

Ever since, Robert has been in the medical field of laser applications. Now he trains people to service medical lasers and follows up with continuous improvement programs. Robert has strong feelings about post-school learning. "Working with photonics, you're looking at a lot of on-the-job training. You're always learning something new. You're never just taught one thing and then do that for ten or twenty years. You're always broadening your mind. Eleven years later after completing my AAS degree, I'm still learning, still trying to better myself."

Robert's philosophy of self-improvement has helped him skyrocket from level-one technician to director of operations at WaveLight, a company that was recently bought by AlconLabs. "With Alcon, there's room for even more advancement. They're such a huge company, the sky's the limit."

Robert also has a strong sense of giving back to the industry that has given him so much. One of his future goals is to return to TSTC as an instructor. "All you do, as some of the instructors say, is play with lasers and instruments all day."

Robert went to school with several other students who also held down full-time jobs. Balancing work, study, and raising a family almost overwhelmed him at times. "The hardest part of completing my degree was working a full-time job while taking classes. But it was because of the instructors' encouragement that I stayed. They were amazing mentors and showed me guidance in a way I never expected. That's what pushed me to stay and work long hours to complete the program. Now it's paid off, not just economically, but mentally. It's been wonderful."

Robert's quick laugh and genuine smile make it clear that he loves what he does. "I enjoy it so much. I have a smile on my face every day." In fact, he tells lots of people he meets about the opportunities available in photonics. "I met a gentleman at the airport whose son didn't know what he wanted to do. I recommended he visit TSTC and take a tour. He did, and graduated with a 4.0 GPA. Just five years ago, he didn't know what he wanted to do. To know I had a hand in that is very fulfilling."

Robert Aguilar, Jr., graduated from Texas State Technical College in 1999 with an associate in applied science degree in laser electro-optics technology. He lives in Woodway, Texas, with his wife Anjanette Aguilar and sons Alexander Aguilar and Jordan Carey.