Jeremy Knoll didn’t pursue a career in laser technology right out of high school. After graduation, he went into industrial construction. For twelve years he worked extended hours, and the money was good, but after careful reconsideration he knew that there was no amount of pay that could replace time with his family. “The field paid very well,” he says. “But I had no life outside of work or time with my family. Once I found out about the Laser and Photonics Technology program at Central Carolina Community College (CCCC) through a family friend, I knew I had to check out the program.”

Jeremy researched the growth of the laser and photonics industry and jobs in the field. Once he met with his advisor, Professor Gary Beasley, he knew the laser field would be a good fit. “It really was just talking to my advisor, Mr. Beasley, and learning about the field and the possibilities in the work force.” Jeremy liked what he heard and thought it sounded like “a great deal,” so he decided to enroll in the program.

Despite having been away from school for twelve years, Jeremy had no difficulties adjusting to college. He decided to take a remedial math course during his first semester to build some basic skills, and it didn’t take long before he was back into the swing of things. “I went from taking remedial math my first semester of school to tutoring students in a mathematics survey course, Algebra, and Trigonometry,” he recalls. He found his classes reasonable and challenging in a good way, and he went on to earn an associate of applied science degree in lasers and photonics technology.

“Get every bit of education you can get. Don’t let your age dissuade you from what you think you can do. I was thirty-two years old when I was in the Laser and Photonics Technology program at CCCC. I was able to excel through the program, side by side with young guys, despite my age.”

During his last semester at CCCC, Jeremy interned for MegaWatt Lasers Inc., located in South Carolina. He knew that he was interested in laser technology, and he hoped to continue working with lasers after graduation. He achieved his goal; upon his graduation, he gladly accepted a full-time position as a laser technician at MegaWatt Lasers Inc.

“There are always exciting developments in the world of lasers! I love being involved with the field!”

Working for MegaWatt Lasers Inc., a company made up of nine to ten employees, has given Jeremy an opportunity to take on more of an engineering role than a technician role. “I’m always learning,” he says. “There is no set book I can turn to figure out how to solve any fickle problem that may arise in the day. I’m constantly learning new things.” He has also adopted other roles in the company. For instance, he is in charge of information technology for the company. Jeremy enjoys all aspects of working with solid state lasers, from research and development to testing and maintenance.

When Jeremy looks to the future, he sees himself continuing his education within the next five years. He is considering pursuing a bachelor’s degree in either electrical engineering or software engineering. “I’m torn between the two,” he says, “but I’m definitely not done. This is just a start.”

Jeremy Knoll earned an associate of applied science degree in laser and photonics technology and a certificate in electronics engineering technology from Central Carolina Community College in 2015. He enjoys spending time with his wife and two daughters, watching movies, reading books, and playing video games.