On lifelong learning: “I am very proud of the field I have chosen, because it has been a great learning experience. Every day, I learn something new, and that makes my job more interesting.”

Jessica Hudson is very proud of her career in photonics. During her time as a cashier at a grocery store, she reflected on which career would be right for her. She decided to attend Central Carolina Community College (CCC), but was unsure about what degree she wanted to pursue. “I’m not one of those people who studied photonics and knew that it was the field I wanted to go into,” Jessica says. “Student services recommended the laser and photonics program after I completed my placement test.” Photonics was something new for Jessica, and she was impressed by the endless job opportunities that the field offered. The advice she received from student services convinced her that photonics would be right for her.

As a new student in CCCC’s laser and photonics program, Jessica had no idea what to expect, but she did expect to learn a lot about lasers. Initially, the program was harder than she had expected, since she had begun the program without any prior experience with photonics. “Almost everyone else had already been in there taking workshops,” she recalls, “So I felt behind.” Instead of letting these feelings discourage her, Jessica stayed focused on her goal to finish the program successfully. She studied hard, and she started getting the hang of it. She explains, “I began the classes, and the semesters went by, and I realized how much I enjoyed learning about lasers and how they worked.”

Jessica says that the hardest part of the laser and photonics program was the amount of time and studying that it demanded. “You have to put yourself in that mindset,” she explains. Jessica was clearly in the right mindset, because as the semesters went by, she became increasingly interested in “how light can be used to our advantage.”

Jessica completed her associate degree in laser and photonics technology in 2012, and since then, she has been working as an engineering technician with Wasatch Photonics. Her responsibilities include using computer programs to assemble, test, and calibrate spectrometers. Jessica is proud of what she has learned about spectrometers, and she explains that “assembly includes circuit-board population, bonding optics, alignment, and collimation.”

Jessica enjoys photonics because it allows her to constantly learn and face new challenges. “I am very proud of the field I have chosen, because it has been a great learning experience,” she says. “Every day, I learn something new, and that makes my job more interesting.” Jessica admits that the commute to and from work is not the most pleasant part of her day. However, she loves where she lives, and she loves where she works, so she finds her job to be worth the time spent in traffic.

Jessica is excited about the future at Wasatch Photonics. When she first started working there, the company was relatively small. Lately, though, the company has been considering expanding, and Jessica hopes to be a part of this growth and development.
Jessica’s career and education have taught her to believe that anyone with the willpower to study and work hard can succeed. She believes that if students are interested in pursuing photonics, “they should go for it.” Jessica’s experience shows that a student does not need a background in the subject to successfully learn the material. What Jessica lacked in experience, she made up for with passion and determination. She believes that students who share her interest in photonics can do the same.

Jessica lives in Bunnlevel, North Carolina. While she is not working as an engineering technician, she likes going out with her friends. Because she lives in the country, she frequently enjoys driving four wheelers.