



Ron Ford maintains his understanding of the world catapulted as a result of earning a Moraine Park associate's degree in Electromechanical Technology – the springboard to a rewarding career and rich life. Ford, a servant of the community and president and CEO of Deutz Power Systems of America, the third largest power generation company in the world, was recently named Moraine Park's 2008 Distinguished Alumnus of the Year.

"The education I received at Moraine Park opened doors for me that were incredible," says Ford, of Norcross, Georgia. But it wasn't until about 10 years after graduation from North Fond du Lac High School, in North Fond du Lac, Wis., that he enrolled in Moraine Park's Electromechanical Technology program. "I worked for quite awhile after high school in law enforcement and then switched careers and became a locomotive mechanic," he says. "But, I found there was a void in my knowledge when it came to the electrical part of my occupation. So I enrolled at Moraine Park."

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His life thereafter whirled him into several promotions within the power generation industry. He got his start at Kohler Co.'s Power Systems Division in Kohler, Wis., after graduation. Fittingly, Ford responded to an application at Moraine Park's Placement Office for what would come to be his "dream job." As a field technician for Kohler, Ford traveled the globe establishing complex power generation systems within prospering, third-world and war-torn countries alike. In several instances, Ford's power generation systems provided the only source of electricity for a given area. "I didn't realize that building power systems for third-world countries could be so difficult," says Ford. Nonetheless, he loved his work.

At Kohler he quickly ascended to take on technical, product and sales training responsibilities across North America. During this time Ford pursued his bachelor's degree in business administration from Marian College. "I liked education and I was ready for more," he attests.

Since earning his bachelor's degree in 2000, Ford has served in many executive-level posts. As area sales manager for Kohler, where he was responsible for residential generators, Ford grew product sales exponentially. In 2004 he joined Tampa Armature Works (TAW) in Tampa, Fla., a large distributor of Kohler power generation systems, where he improved technical service and industrial sales and managed the consumer group division. Ultimately, Ford became responsible for the entire Power Systems Group at TAW and is credited with helping boost revenue by 59 percent. Today, as president and CEO of Deutz, Ford is responsible for a company producing very large power generators. The icing on the cake, he maintains, is the company's "green" focus and commitment to alternative energy. Deutz is known for using methane gas as an energy source with no harmful by-products. "It involves using bad gas for something good and supplying power," Ford says.

And while Ford's career is highly accomplished, his selection as Alumnus of the Year came as a result of more than his professional life; it also came as a result of his dedication to the community and Moraine Park.

For eight years Ford served on the Moraine Park Electro-Mechanical Technology advisory board, comprised of industry experts who work closely with Moraine Park to improve and constantly revise curriculum. "It was a great experience," says Ford, who served as chair for two terms. "It was a way for me to work with the school to help guide coursework. I shared what I knew about where the power generator industry was heading to help Moraine Park better prepare Electromechanical Technology graduates."

His contributions were many, according to Raj Pathare, Moraine Park's dean of Trades and Manufacturing. "Ron influenced the program by identifying occupational competencies and assisting in recruitment and placement of program students. He donated equipment, sponsored field trips for program students and was active in creating public awareness of Moraine Park's programs."

Ford, who feels honored to be selected as the College's Distinguished Alumnus, says giving back was the least he could do. "If I didn't have the skills learned from my associate's degree, I wouldn't be anywhere now," he maintains.

That's why Ford pushes learning and the importance of an education as a Career Day speaker at local schools. "My son got me involved talking to classes for Career Day. Sometimes I take the math the children are working on and show them how I use it in everyday life, calculating power curves, for example. I love trying to make education relevant to life and I love working with the kids."

As a man committed to helping others and his industry, Ford is also known for his contributions as a member of the Electrical Generating System Association, a trade group of generator manufacturers, and the Tampa Bay Elks Lodge. "The Elks do a tremendous amount to help military families and veterans. It's hard on families when a loved one is away. So we gather money and resources to help them out. We also do a large amount for disabled vets. They serve their country and come home disabled. They do that for us. The least we can do is try to give something back."

As Moraine Park's deserved Distinguished Alumnus, Ford maintains he has one clear message for graduating students. "Moraine Park is just the first step," he says. "Strive for more. Never be satisfied. Keep reaching for more, because it's out there to get."