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Pomp and circumstance: Joe Henry (middle front) is one of 27 members of the 2013 court reporting graduating class at Orleans Technical Institute. The graduation ceremony took place last month. PHOTO COURTESY OF VEROLUCE PHOTOGRAPHY

Court reporting — the verdict is in

By [Tom Waring](#) July 31, 2013



The 2013 court reporting graduating class at Orleans Technical Institute is the biggest class in the program's history.

Joe Henry wanted a profession with flexible hours and the potential to make good money, and he thinks the court reporting field will offer him that.

Henry, a 21-year-old from Modena Park, is one of 27 members of the 2013 court reporting graduating class at Orleans Technical Institute.

"I'm 21 years old and starting my career," he said. "There are plenty of jobs out there."

The graduation ceremony took place on June 11 at Plumbers Local 690's Waterfall Room.

Henry is finishing up a few classes and his internship at Strehlow & Associates Inc., a court reporting agency based in Newtown, Bucks County.

Earlier, he interned at the Criminal Justice Center.

Graduation day for Henry will be Aug. 23, and he expects to be freelancing for Strehlow as his first professional job.

"This fall, I'll be working and making money. I won't have to explain where I go to school," he said.

Orleans has offered a court reporting program since 1986, and the 2013 graduating class is the biggest in its history.

Still, many people view Orleans as a trade school. Indeed, it offers carpentry, electrical, plumbing and heating and air conditioning and refrigeration.

The court reporting program remains popular, and Orleans welcomes people to observe a class Tuesdays at 8:45 a.m. and Wednesdays at 6 p.m. The school is located at 2770 Red Lion Road.

In addition, there will be an online webinar on Wednesday, Aug. 7, at noon. Reserve a place by going to www.gotomeeting.com/register/304953272

Court reporters transcribe depositions or court proceedings; sit in on business meetings, stockholder sessions, public hearings and arbitrations; and provide closed captioning of news, entertainment, sports and live broadcasts for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Their job is to deliver a verbatim account of the spoken word.

"It really is an interesting profession," said Orleans admissions director Debbie Bello.

Orleans boasts 100 percent job placement for graduates. And, as noted on CNNMoney and by other sources, some court reporters can earn up to \$100,000 a year.

"You can do freelance work as much as you want," Bello said.

Henry, who appeared in a television commercial promoting a recent open house, followed his older sister Julie into the profession.

Julie Henry, 25, attended Community College of Philadelphia after graduating from Archbishop Ryan High School. She later worked for a sign company and did some bartending at Paddy Whacks and Chickie's & Pete's.

Back then, the court reporting course was offered in Center City, and she did not have any interest in traveling there for classes. In 2007, the program moved to Orleans Technical Institute's new location at 2770 Red Lion Road, and she jumped at the chance to enroll.

Today, she freelances for Strehlow & Associates, and makes pretty good money. She has some tips for prospective students.

"It's not for everyone," she said. "You have to be committed. You have to practice a lot. You pretty much know in the first semester if you'll be able to do it."

Joe Henry graduated from Ryan in 2010. He was thinking of trying to play lacrosse in college, but wasn't sure of a career path, so he took the same route as his sister. He enrolled in September 2010 and is graduating in three years.

"Once my sister mentioned you can pick your schedule, it was a professional field and you can make good money, it seemed perfect," he said.

The Orleans court reporting classes teach students stenography skills, court procedures and legal and medical terminology. Teachers also stress that they must dress and act professionally at work sites.

To pass, a student needs to be able to type 225 words per minute on their machine, which includes a keyboard, screen and recording device.

"You're not going to get it right away," said Joe Henry, adding that students typically start at 40 words a minute.

Classes took place Mondays through Thursdays, mostly in the day, but sometimes at night.

Henry has given up time at his family's home in North Wildwood, N.J., to focus on his schooling.

"It was worth it. I'm 21 and I'm done. That was my plan," he said.

In the classroom, he's upbeat. The other students have nicknamed him "PJ," for "Positive Joe."

The other students are all women, and females dominate the profession.

"It's mostly women. There aren't many guys in the field," Henry said. "I don't get why guys don't do it. I love it."

Henry's past work experience has mostly been in delis. He's glad he'll no longer have to cut his fingers on a slicer.

Looking back, the decision to become a court reporter was a good one for him. He is looking forward to learning more on the job.

"This school definitely helped me," he said. "There's always another goal to reach. I can't wait to get better and better." ••

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