

PIONEER PROFILES



IMAGE: MCC CDL Behind the Wheel Instructor John Pawlak

Pioneer Profiles: Meet John Pawlak

"I am a truck driver and have been for over three decades. I want to teach the new generation the right and safe skills they need to retain the old traditions of being caretakers of the road". - John Pawlak

MILES CITY, MONTANA: Miles Community College's Behind the Wheel Commercial Driver's License (CDL) Instructor, John Pawlak, has been driving trucks since he was 16 growing up in Snowflake, Arizona—a town named for two early-day settlers, Erastus Snow and William J. Flake.

Though Pawlak has been with the college's CDL program since the beginning of the 2023 academic year and brings his thirty-plus years of driving experience into the classroom.

"I'm proud to be able to gain the knowledge and have the experience to train and teach others to pass a CDL course," he says.

Over a million truck drivers are expected to retire within the next ten years, according to the American Trucking Association. Since the Association also estimates a current truck-driver shortage of 82,000, there's never been more need for Pawlak's skills, experience, and instruction in the classroom.

Pawlak says his favorite part of his new job is how welcome he feels at MCC.

He lists "the support within the school, the warm welcome I had during my orientation, the standards of the organization" as the aspects of his position he most enjoys.

A typical day for Pawlak involves lots of “windshield time.”

“Outside the cab I see everything through a windshield,” he says. “Inside a cab I see drivers learning how to operate a vehicle safely.”

And it’s fun.

“I get to see the joy of new CDL drivers gaining knowledge and experience on a daily routine,” he adds.

If he wasn’t instructing new drivers, Pawlak would be back behind the wheel himself, driving as an independent operator in the oil industry.

Outside the job, Pawlak enjoys panning for gold, spending time on the homestead, and gathering with his children and grandchildren at family reunions.

His best career advice is, “be persistent, stay focused” -- qualities which have served him well, both on the road and in training new truck drivers at MCC.

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