

**“It would be selfish of me to do all these things and end up in jail and leave her without a father.”**



David Prak came to the Advanced CNC Skills Training program at UMass Lowell from the United Teen Equality Center, a Lowell nonprofit that helps at-risk young people get back on track.

David had dropped out of high school at 15½, a fact he is not proud of. He says his parents tried everything, even private school, but he had gotten in with the wrong crowd and “really didn’t see the point in going to school back then!” At age 20 he enrolled in a program at UTEC which offered different levels of study to help prepare for the GED.

The program allowed students to work at their own pace and David completed it quickly and ended up getting his GED at age 21. “I wish I got my GED sooner,” he says, “but, you know, it’s never too late.”

“A few years ago I had been going through a lot,” he shared. “The past sort of caught up with me and it made me take a hard look at my future.” Friends had suggested he go to UTEC for that second chance. A short while later he found out he was going to be a father. In retrospect, David realizes how very close he came to doing jail time, which would have left his daughter Kasi without a father in her life. “That was a real wake up call for me,” shared Prak.

“Thinking about becoming a parent, things are no longer just about you. Now there is a baby too!” he said. “You don’t realize what being a parent is until the first time you hold your child - from that moment on everything is different. I wanted to make a good life for my daughter, for my family. “

After earning his GED, David was eager to get out and explore new opportunities. He enrolled in college and was completing his first semester when he learned about the Advanced CNC Skills Training program at UMass Lowell. He wanted in!

“I was taking liberal arts programs in college just to take something, but I had no real direction and it felt like I was wasting time.” David saw the CNC program as something that would give him the opportunity to work in a new career and help his family much sooner. He still plans to pursue his associates’ degree later on when he has a better idea of a direction. The Advanced CNC Skills Training will put him on a pathway to earn 26 college credits while working at a job, an idea that really appeals to David.

David began work on March 1, machining graphite with a new joint partnership in the Northeast region of the state. One of the partner companies is Japanese and David's technical skills, along with his lean training, made him very attractive to his new employer.