Welcome to 88.7, and welcome to our Parkland Spotlight series. My name is Ryan McDavitt, and today I’m joined by Rich Furr. Rich is one of the first chief audio engineers here at Parkland College Radio, and he was also a part of one of the first staffs here at the radio station. During my interview with Rich we discussed a few things including how he got involved with the radio station, how the radio station has affected his life, and if he has any recommendations for students currently working with the radio station. But to start things off let’s have Rich explain to us what his current job is right now at the University of Illinois.

So I work with a group called the Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning, and what I do is I assist faculty in the use of technology in the teaching-learning process.

OK. So did you, were you, like, inspired to get into that position or is it just something you kind of came across?

Mostly I, well, mostly it just came across. I’d been doing some other things not in any kind of technology, and I originally, when I started out to U of I was actually in a somewhat similar position. Bit what I did, I actually did training for equipment operation for, for classroom equipment in the classrooms at the university.

And how has your previous work, if it has, with the radio station affected what you do now? If it has any effect.

Well it did it. I mean it helped me get the job in several different ways. I was good with technology, and I learned a lot out here at Parkland as chief engineer of the radio station. Plus, the fact is it helped me, it helped me work really well with people. In fact, I used to train students and some of our some of our staff as far as that goes. So, basically, just gave me a good handle on assisting people using technology.

OK. So moving away to that and back at the times when you were at the school, how much has it changed since you were here?
Furr: 02:03 Quite significantly. Nowadays, of course, basically computers run everything, for the most part. When I was here everything was essentially manually operated from tape decks to what we called cart machines, to turntables. Everything was basically all completely hands on no automatic switching with anything.

McDavitt: 02:24 OK. And then when you became a part of the radio station were you looking to be a part of the radio station, or did you just kind of stumble upon the opportunity and you took it?

Furr: 02:33 Well, actually, it was a bit of a history there. At the time, there was the broadcast technology program here at Parkland, so I was actually a part of that. In fact, I was one of the first group of people within that program, so I actually got to work on the equipment as a student prior to becoming the chief engineer.

McDavitt: 02:54 So after working on the equipment, did that inspire you to go on and take that chief engineering job then?

Furr: 03:05 There's actually a story behind that, as a matter of fact. I had taken the position, and at the time I was actually working at Channel 3 concurrently, and I was kind of being overworked a little bit, because I was working two jobs. I gave it up and then the chief engineer at the time, he decided that he no longer wanted the position. They asked me back to become chief engineer again, so actually I got very lucky in the sense that I was able to come back into this position.

McDavitt: 03:37 And then I guess going off of that a little bit, do you have any, like, favorite memories of the radio station when you worked here? Any, like, fond memories that stick out to you?

Furr: 03:44 I have a lot of, actually, really good memories. Dan Hughes, the general manager and I, we got along really well, and we have all sorts of good stories that we still -- and I actually still see him today -- and we actually get some, we actually have some big laughs with some of the old stories that we tell. So, yeah, Dan and I, we have a lot of good stories that, that we like to tell each other and we still get big laughs today.

McDavitt: 04:10 OK. So if you were given, like, go back in time and you were given the chance to work at the radio station again, would you obviously take that opportunity again?

Furr: 04:20 Very much so. I had a very nice time. Parkland was very good to me in that respect, and the radio station itself was very good to
me. It gave me an opportunity to grow my knowledge of the broadcast industry.

McDavitt: 04:35 After you left Parkland, at all, like, your experiences at Parkland have a positive effect on your life or alter anything that you had planned for yourself?

Furr: 04:43 I actually had a very positive effect on my life. I had a dual role here at Parkland College. My, my main role was to maintain and repair any equipment situation that came up. But the other part of my role was to actually teach, in that sense of the word. I didn't hold classes or anything like that. But what I did do, we had student engineers. And so I was able to help them grow and learn their knowledge by showing them how things, you know, were put together, and being taken apart, and being repaired. So that definitely was a positive aspect. Also, that helped me grow in the sense that I was able to take that knowledge of working with people and being able to help train people for my future career.

McDavitt: 05:34 And if you're just tuning in you're listening to the Parkland Spotlight series. My name is Ryan McDavitt, and I am sitting down with Rich Furr who is a former chief audio engineer here at Parkland College and was a part of one of the first staffs here at the radio station. So coming into college, did you have any big, any plans for yourself through college and after college or did your experiences with the radio station alter any plans you had for yourself, or did they just kind of like fall in place with what you had planned?

Furr: 05:59 I didn't have a plan in place and things kind of fell into place for me. I was working at Channel 3 at the time, originally as a projectionist, which no one knows what it is anymore, but I actually was, we actually loaded up a 16 millimeter film for, for air on Channel 3. And then I became an engineer at Channel 3, and those, those plans all kind of came about, sort of, you know, like most things in life, you get some you get some good breaks and such and so it just happened well. And as I said the position here at Parkland opened up and I was able to apply and get that position. And so it just kind of all fell into place, because, as you know, things don't necessarily just fall into place easily, and certain, and plans can always go awry.

McDavitt: 06:56 Yeah. So just to clarify, were you a current student when you took the job here? Or had you already graduated and moved on?
Furr: 07:03 I was hired as the chief engineer after I'd graduated. And fortunately as I was able to stick with it. I was here for I believe 15 years.

McDavitt: 07:13 OK. So I guess just the close out...

Furr: 07:17 Certainly having the background knowledge for the audio area is important. But just having that hands on experience will I think make your career go much farther much faster.

McDavitt: 07:29 Okay. And then before we finish you have anything else you'd like to say?

Furr: 07:33 Jobs. Things have changed tremendously because of computers and automation.

McDavitt: 07:38 All right well thank you for joining me today. Rich.

Furr: 07:40 You're welcome.

McDavitt: 07:42 And if you're just getting into the end of our interview, my name is Ryan McDavitt and I just got done talking with Rich Furr who is a former chief audio engineer here at Parkland College, and was a part of one of the first staffs here at the radio station. During our interview with Rich we go over how Rich was given the opportunity to work with the radio station and also how he was given the opportunity to become the chief audio engineer during his time here. We also talk about how his time here at the radio station has helped him with different jobs he has held after leaving the radio station. And to wrap things up we asked him if you had any recommendations for students is currently working with the radio station here at Parkland. Thank you for listening and you've been tuned into a Parkland Spotlight series interview. Make sure to stay tuned to 88.7 WPCD, where you can hear more interviews done by fellow students. Now we're going to get right back into some great alternative music here at 88.7 WPCD FM where we reinvent alternative.