



EQ School of Hair Design: Cultivating Cosmetology Professionals

Cosmetology jobs are expected to grow about 14 percent between now and the year 2020, according to the Bureau of Labor and Statistics. It's an appealing field, particularly for those who want opportunities for flexibility and self-employment.

Council Bluffs has been home to a cosmetology school for 55 years. It began as Stewart School of Hair Design and later became EQ School of Hair Design.

Owners Craig and Julie Mead bought the business in 2004 and have operated it ever since. For 20 years, the school has been located downtown. At the end of July, it will move into the former Peterson Elementary School.

The new location has more space and is easier to access, according to Craig, because of better parking and proximity to the interstate. The new space will have an improved layout as well, as it was remodeled specifically for the cosmetology school.

The EQ School of Hair Design is a nationally accredited. The Meads developed their own "EQ Stars" program to supplement their objective to train students to be professionals when they graduate. "Highly successful people have some particular traits," Craig explains.

Students and staff are expected to live up to give key principles that include the Golden Rule of treating others as you would like to be treated and emphasize characteristics like honesty, integrity, professionalism, innovation and quality.

"Everything we do is for the education of the student. We provide education to get students ready for a professional career," says Craig.

The school employs 10 people. The Meads have a habit of giving back to the community. They're involved near-monthly events that benefit nonprofits or those who are less fortunate.

EQ School of Hair Design students have provided hair styling services to high school seniors attending area proms who wouldn't otherwise have the means to get their hair done. Many times, the monthly specials are tied into giving events where customers receive a discount if they bring in a donation. The school is currently collecting school supplies for Children's Square. Before that it was collecting items for the local animal shelter.

The school has seven start dates each year, which translates to an enrollment of approximately 50 students. Tuition costs \$18,750 for the 14-month program.

It boasts an impressive job placement rate in the 90th percentile. The remainder of graduates that aren't placed immediately in a job are typically choosing taking time off to raise families, according to Craig.

Although men are entering cosmetology at higher rates than the past, the majority of graduates from the program are women. Craig points out that cosmetology is a unique industry in that it allows anyone a chance to control their own destinies. "Students can pick where they want to go and how hard they want to work. There aren't many industries that allow people to do that."