

Company Highlights:

Concord Campus Cosmetology Student Receives OPI Scholarship



(Left to Right) Dean Gina Geronimo, Student Lucy Souza and OPI Representative Doni Horn.

On August 10, 2011, Milan Institute of Cosmetology student Lucia "Lucy" Souza was awarded a \$500 scholarship from OPI. Lucy arrived at the Milan campus in Concord, California, accompanied by her family as requested by Dean Gina Geronimo. She was unaware of the scholarship ceremony awaiting her. All of the faculty, staff and students gathered with Lucy and her family around the school time clock. As the clock struck 2pm, "Celebrate good times, come on!" began to play down the hallway. OPI representative Doni Horn emerged with balloons attached to a small boom box playing music. The excitement grew as Lucy realized the meaning of the celebration. Doni proceeded to read Lucy's scholarship application essay aloud to the entire school and then presented the \$500 OPI scholarship award. An overwhelmed Lucy accepted the certificate amid hugs and happy tears.

It was the passion for cosmetology Lucy demonstrated in her application essay that won her the scholarship. She developed a love of beauty early on, giving makeovers to friends for high school dances and spa quality pampering to her best friend on her wedding day. Her interest continued

What's New

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From health issues to family emergencies, Samantha Fitch overcame all obstacles to complete the Cosmetology program and start her own business.

Learn how Nicole Sprague went from accounting student to Milan Institute Corporate Accounting Officer in less than nine months.

Campus Profile, Page 3

This issue's featured campus is the new Milan Institute in Las Vegas, Nevada. Get to know the city, school director and future plans for the school.

Employer Profile, Page 3

Find out what it takes to be a successful independent contractor at the La Ti Da Salon and Boutique in Bakersfield, California.

to grow later on in doing her own hair, makeup and nails for the Miss America Pageant preliminary competitions. Lucy decided to professionally pursue her dream and enrolled in the Cosmetology program at the Milan Institute Concord campus in April 2011. She is currently enjoying her time providing services to clients at the school's student salon. Upon graduating and receiving her cosmetology license next year, she plans to work in a salon as an assistant until she's ready to be an independent hair stylist. "I love working with people," said Lucy. "In a way, we are like therapists for our clients. We listen and let them vent so they can unwind and enjoy the service. I want people to walk out of our student salon feeling relaxed and beautiful. That's how I know my appointment was a success."

Graduate Profile: Samantha Fitch, Class of 2010

Cosmetology Program

Milan Institute of Cosmetology – Visalia, CA



“Career possibilities in the Cosmetology industry are endless. Without the knowledge I received at Milan, I wouldn’t be where I am today.”

Since childhood, Samantha Fitch had wanted to become a cosmetologist, but her parents did not approve of her career choice at the time. She tried working as a medical assistant only to find that it was not the right path for her. She tried other careers including kitchen and bath design for Home Depot, which appealed to her creative interests but was not fulfilling long-term. Samantha ultimately decided to do what was right for her and follow her passion for the beauty industry. She soon enrolled in the Cosmetology program at Milan Institute of Cosmetology in

Visalia, California, to get the training she needed.

Samantha’s journey over the next 18 months was not an easy one. Part way into her program, she suffered an injury that made it impossible for her to practice techniques and was forced to take a leave of absence. After she resumed her training, she faced new health issues and family emergencies. Fortunately, Samantha was able to make up the hours she missed. “Everyone at the school was so understanding and helpful,” said Samantha. “There were times I wanted to give up because as soon as I would overcome one obstacle, I would be faced with another. But I refused to quit and studied at home for at least 20 minutes per day so I wouldn’t be lost when I returned to school.”

Despite her hardships, she continued her program and made the most of her training. “I truly enjoyed my time at Milan,” said Samantha. “The instructors were always so helpful and made the criteria easier to understand.” Samantha noted that she learned not only traditional techniques but also tricks/tips for the latest beauty trends. This helped her to start working immediately after receiving

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Graduate Profile: Nicole Sprague, Class of 2011

Accounting Program

Milan Institute – Visalia, CA



“I decided to further my education so I could find a good position and start a long-term career. I am very happy to be employed with Milan.”

Knowing firsthand the quality of training provided at its campuses, Milan Institute readily hires its own graduates. One such example is Nicole Sprague, a graduate of Milan Institute in Visalia, California. Before attending Milan, she had worked for nine years off and on at her family’s motorcycle shop. Unfortunately, the business closed in 2008 due to the economic downturn. Unable to secure

another job on her own, her brother recommended that she go back to school to gain new skills and knowledge to give her a competitive edge. That’s when she decided to enroll in the Accounting program at Milan. “I decided to continue my education so that I could find a good position and start a long-term career,” said Nicole.

With the help of the Milan instructors and administrative staff, Nicole became a career-ready graduate in only eight months. “I loved the smaller class sizes and the one-on-one attention the instructor was able to give me,” said Nicole. “I’m glad they taught manual accounting. Anyone can learn how to use a computer program, but to actually understand the fundamentals of accounting is very important.” Having received an education that extended beyond just accounting, she notes that the most important skills she learned were interviewing for a new position and writing business emails. Nicole managed to stay focused on her education despite being a full-time student and caring for her family. “Being a mother of three kids and going to school is tough, but with the support of a great

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Campus Profile: Milan Institute • Las Vegas, NV



Las Vegas, NV Campus

The Milan Institute campus in Las Vegas, Nevada, is the newest addition to the Milan school group. The school first opened in 1999 under the name “Academy of Healing Arts” and offered several healthcare programs along with a Massage Therapy program. The campus was acquired by Milan Institute in June 2011 and is now offering Administrative Medical Assistant, Medical Assisting and

Massage Therapy programs. Approximately 290 students are currently enrolled with a growing interest list. The campus is located at 710 South Tonopah Drive, Las Vegas, Nevada 89106.

In addition to providing quality career training, Milan Institute in Las Vegas also has an on-campus student massage spa open to the public. Massage Therapy students have the opportunity to fine tune their techniques by providing massage services to spa clients. The student massage spa currently serves over 40 clients per week, a number that is expected to grow with the addition of new Massage Therapy students. Value-priced massage services such as Swedish, deep tissue, sports and therapeutic stone massages are available, and new specials are announced quarterly. All services are performed by students under instructor supervision.

The school is located in Las Vegas, Nevada, which bills itself as The Entertainment Capital of the World. It is an

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Employer Profile: La Ti Da Salon & Boutique • Bakersfield, CA



One of the current employers of Milan Institute of Cosmetology graduates is La Ti Da Salon and Boutique in Bakersfield, California. It is owned and operated by Kasey McDonald, a licensed Esthetician. La Ti Da is both a salon and day spa, offering a wide variety of skin care, hair, nail and massage services. It also has a boutique in the front reception area where clients can shop for purses and hats as well as salon products while waiting. Located downtown in a building from the early 1900s, the salon is both unique and charming. “We are very lucky,” said La Ti Da Owner Kasey McDonald. “Between the beautiful location and the wonderful team we have working here, it’s hard for clients to resist coming back!” The salon has built a loyal client base since it first opened its doors in February 2010.

Kasey recruited her first Milan Institute graduate from the Bakersfield campus in February 2011. The new La Ti Da

team member was Terry Esquer, a graduate of the Esthetician program. After hiring Terry, she quickly saw all of the skills Milan Institute had taught him and was impressed. “There are times he keeps me on my toes!” said Kasey about Terry’s work performance. “I discovered that Milan graduates have a passion for the esthetician (skin care) industry that is contagious to the rest of my salon. It’s like a breath of fresh air.” La Ti Da currently rents booth space to 13 independent contractors, including two estheticians, four hair stylists, five manicurists and two massage therapists.

If Kasey could sum up in one word what she looks for when renting a booth at La Ti Da, it is initiative. “If someone shows me that he/she has initiative, it speaks volumes of that person’s character,” stated Kasey. “To me it means that this individual is determined to succeed in his/her career.” She goes on to say that taking initiative usually goes hand-in-hand with being a team player. “With that kind of attitude, I can almost guarantee that this person will be successful,” said Kasey.

Kasey advises new Esthetician graduates to focus on customer service. “At the very beginning of your career, this will be your most important skill,” revealed Kasey. “If you can provide your client with great customer service (e.g., arrive early, listen, do not rush, establish a relationship and always go the extra mile), you will have that client forever. Remember, they are the ones paying

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Graduate Profile: Samantha Fitch (Continued)

her license and to better compete with experienced cosmetologists. "I liked how the Cosmetology program was split into three phases," she said. "By learning all of the basic knowledge and skills in Phase 1, I was confident and ready to service clients in the student salon in Phase 2. Phase 3 fully prepared me for the California Cosmetology State Board Exam. In fact, I became so familiar with it that I decided later to start my own company renting state board exam kits."

After graduation, Samantha went on to work for two different salons before starting her own kit company. "The state board exam was very stressful for me because the kit I had rented was unorganized and missing many items," she recalls. "I missed an entire procedure because of how poor the kit was. I didn't want anyone else to share my bad experience so I started my own kit company." She now owns Wickham & Fitch Kit Co. and has been renting state board exam kits to graduates since September 2010. "I love my new career," said Samantha. "Being able to help graduates pass their exam by providing a well-organized kit customized to their specific needs gives me a great sense of pride."

Samantha continues to set new career goals. Helping graduates prepare for the state board exam has been such a rewarding experience that her long-term plans have evolved. Originally, she wanted to open her own day spa, but now she hopes to become a Phase 3 Instructor at Milan while continuing to run her kit company. "Without the knowledge I received at Milan, I wouldn't be where I am today," she said. "It just goes to show that you can apply your education in many different ways to make it fit your own career plans."

Samantha advises other cosmetology students to stay focused while in school. "Pay attention and learn as much as possible," she recommends. "But most importantly, don't give up. The career possibilities in the Cosmetology industry are endless."

Graduate Profile: Nicole Sprague (Continued)

husband and family, we made it through," said Nicole.

She is now an Accounting Officer at the Milan Institute corporate office in Visalia. Having been a very professional and hard-working student, the Visalia campus recommended her for a Corporate Purchasing Specialist position, which she started just two weeks after graduating. After one week of training, the Corporate Accounting Officer position became available, and Nicole was able to take the higher position instead. "All of the ladies in the corporate office are great and that means a lot when you have to work so closely with people," said Nicole. "Everyone has been so patient while training me. I am very happy to be employed with Milan, and I plan on staying with the company for a long time."

Nicole wants her fellow Milan accounting students to know

that sometimes the coursework can get confusing, but if they stick with it, they will get it. "One thing my Instructor Sherry always said, 'If you don't use it, you lose it,' which is so true," said Nicole. "You have to keep up with your skills even after you graduate in order to be the best you can be."

Campus Profile: Milan Institute – Las Vegas, NV (Continued)

internationally renowned major resort city for gambling, shopping and fine dining. A growing retirement and family city, the Las Vegas metropolitan area has almost two million people and is the most populous city in Nevada. Students can take advantage of the robust entertainment life of Las Vegas during non-school hours, and an array of day spas catering to tourists provide good career opportunities for Massage Therapy graduates.

Leading the Milan Institute team at the Las Vegas campus is School Director Wendell Myers. Wendell first began his career in education in the Career Services department at UEI College in Ontario and San Bernardino, California. From there, he went on to become school director of Kaplan College in Riverside and Lake Forest, California, and then regional director of career services, overseeing 22 Kaplan campuses. Wendell was heading the No Child Left Behind program for a private education group just before he transitioned over to what is now the Milan Institute Las Vegas campus. He is also highly involved within the local community, serving as a selected member of the Nevada Office of Minority Health Advisory Committee, the Nathan Adelson Hospice, and the Nevada Donor Network, Inc. "I see my community involvement as an opportunity to open more doors for our students," said Wendell.

Now one of the larger schools within the Milan Institute group, the Las Vegas campus is expected to continue to grow. The school is projected to start a Dental Assistant program in the near future. "We have great plans on the horizon," said Wendell. "Nestled in the center of the health district, just north of the Las Vegas strip, we are poised to make some noise." For more information on the healthcare and massage career training programs or student massage services at Milan Institute in Las Vegas, Nevada, please call (702) 671-4242 or visit the website at www.MilanInstitute.edu.

Employer Profile: La Ti Da Salon (Continued)

you, not the other way around. Give them the time and energy they deserve!" She also wants recent graduates to understand that they probably won't be the best at everything when they first start working. However, with practice and continuing education, estheticians can improve their techniques to become better or even the best. La Ti Da Salon and Boutique is located at 2025 18th Street in Bakersfield, California, and can be reached at (661) 631-1112.