

Times have been tough in North Canton, Ohio with the area's unemployment rate hovering well above the national average for years. Republic Steel, once a major provider of jobs in the Canton area, went out of business in 2002, shedding almost 2,000 jobs and casting a dark shadow on the morale of residents.

Like many of his fellow former employees at Republic Steel, John Filliez of Canton had a choice: look for a similar job in an American industry going through rough times or take a different path. After seeing ads for Brown Mackie College — North Canton (founded as Southern Ohio College) in local newspapers and at employment resource centers, Filliez enrolled in the school's Accounting program in February 2003.

"I decided to go to the College after I visited the school," says the 55-year-old Filliez. "I liked the one-course-per-month schedule and the class sizes."

Going back to school decades after graduating from high school and after 29 years at Republic Steel was somewhat frightening at first for Filliez. But he felt that he had to further his education in order to have any chance of a new career.

"The most positive aspect about Brown Mackie College — North Canton in preparing for a new career was the encouragement I received. I proved to myself that I could do it. I graduated in February 2004 with a diploma in Accounting, with honors, and a 3.83 grade point average. The great staff and faculty always encouraged me to keep up the good work."

And that's exactly what the faculty and staff at Brown Mackie College — North Canton take pride in. "We know that many students are non-traditional and may have retraining issues," says Glenna Abney, academic dean at Brown Mackie College — North Canton. "One of our goals is to help students overcome barriers, whether it be retraining after a layoff or returning to school at an older age."

Despite facing adversity after being laid off from Republic Steel, Filliez is a shining example of someone who knows that it's never too late to learn new skills for a new career, thanks to Brown Mackie College — North Canton.

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