

ready, willing, and able



people with intellectual disabilities creating an inclusive labour force



Canadian Association for
Community Living Foundation

Fondation de l'Association canadienne
pour l'intégration communautaire

Diversity includes. On se ressemble.

PEOPLE
FIRST
OF CANADA



PERSONNES
D'ABORD
DU CANADA

Employment is a very important part of our adult lives. It is much more than simply earning money. Through paid work we meet new people and establish new friendships, increase feelings of self worth, enable greater independence, become part of community and contribute to that community. Perhaps more importantly it affects how other people and society in general view us — recognizing our value, contribution, ability, and capacity.

The current employment picture for people with intellectual disabilities in Canada is not positive. Their employment rate is only one-third of the employment rate of people without a disability (25.5% compared to 75.5%). Those who are working earn less than half of those without a disability. In the absence of appropriate supports, employment opportunities in the open labour market remain closed to most persons with intellectual disabilities. There is still a systemic reliance on sheltered, segregated options rather than participation in the competitive labour force. Policy and program factors still create layers of disadvantage and multiple barriers to employment; negative employer attitudes and misperceptions abound; and access to needed employment related supports remains inconsistent.

Yet we know that adults with intellectual disabilities are ready, willing and able to work. We know that when given the opportunity, and with appropriate support, they are excellent employees. We know that increasing the employment rate of people with intellectual disabilities would contribute significantly to addressing current and future labour shortages in this country. We know that employing people with intellectual disabilities makes good business sense. We need to now act on this knowledge.

This booklet presents stories of successful employment collected from provinces and territories across this country, from the perspective of both employee and employer. Stories that illustrate and demonstrate the fact that regardless of label or perceived level of disability, adults with intellectual disabilities can participate in and contribute to the labour market within this country. Stories that represent the thousands of Canadians who when provided with opportunity and support can and do develop careers and take their rightful place in the labour force. Stories that remind us that many more thousands of adults with intellectual disabilities need to be provided with that opportunity.



Hiring Those with Disabilities Easier Than You Think

Melinda Maldonado, The Canadian Press

Hiring people with disabilities often doesn't require adding accommodation measures and can boost the bottom line of a business, says Mark Wafer, president of Megleen Inc., and Tim Hortons franchise owner. Mr. Wafer is also a member of a federal panel looking to get more people with disabilities into the workforce. Wafer has hired 82 people with disabilities over the last 17 years, including 33 out of his current workforce of 210 spread over his six locations.

One of the biggest misconceptions about hiring people with disabilities is that a workplace will need to be revamped with accommodation measures, said Wafer, who has limited hearing. "Most companies do not have to make any accommodation in order to fit somebody in," said Wafer, who added that if a company is making a very expensive accommodation, "they probably got somebody who is the wrong fit for the position."

It all started when Wafer hired a young man named Clint Sparling 17 years ago. Sparling, who has Down syndrome, was in his last year of high school when a teacher saw a posting in the window and recommended that Wafer hire the young man. "I didn't have a lot of experience being around people with intellectual disabilities at the time, but I decided to go ahead and hire Clint," Wafer said.

Wafer was putting in long hours getting his business off the ground and realized he would need some outside help to train Sparling.

"I'm an expert at making coffee, but I'm not an expert at disabilities," he said. Faced with a new situation, Wafer enlisted the help of community partners to identify potential employees and eventually help with training. "I had to teach Clint how to take a bus, and that took a couple days, and I didn't have that time," he said. "One of these organizations sent in job coaches and helped to train Clint."

Sparling is still working for the company 17 years later. "He actually became one of my best employees," said Wafer, adding that Sparling married his high school sweetheart six years ago, and now owns his own condo.

Wafer's annual employee turnover rate is 35 per cent, compared with the Tim Hortons average of 75 per cent. "That's



not because I'm a better operator, it's simply because we hire people with disabilities," he said. "The average tenure for one of my employees is a year and three months but for my employees with a disability it's seven years."

Wafer stresses that hiring people with disabilities changes workplace culture for all of his employees. "They're now working for a company that's inclusive, a company that obviously 'get's it' and they want to be part of that," he said. Wafer notes that in 2011 the absenteeism rate among his 33 employees with disabilities was zero. "The job is very, very precious to them," said Wafer. One employee with a disability job-hunted for 11 years before joining his team.

Wafer is now using his experience to share best practices on engaging people with disabilities in the workforce with other business owners, and works with Joe Dale, executive director of the Ontario Disability Employment Network, in the Rotary at Work program.

He estimates they have given 150 presentations over the last three years, which resulted in 145 hires of people with disabilities across Ontario. Presentations to Tim Hortons representatives resulted in over 200 stores across Ontario hiring at least one person with a disability.

Transitioning From High School

Scottie Prouse was the first person to be hired through the SEDLER program using the Transitional Planning Program, which seeks work for high school students helping them gain employable skills that they can use in their job search, post high school. Scottie worked with Tommy Ricketts Arena that first winter and was again employed using the same program that summer once he was completed high school.

When the stadium opened again in the fall, Scottie was hired in a full time seasonal position. Scottie continued to work at the stadium, helping with cleaning the ice, janitorial,

clearing snow and security and ice patrol for the next four years. He then saw a need for a change and began working a full time position at Bayco

Sales and Service in June 2012. At Bayco, Scottie is responsible for janitorial, helping stock shelves, assisting with customers and some general maintenance in and around the building. He is very excited about this job as he gets to work around his passion, snowmobiles. Scottie works a 40 hour work week, and when not at work he is actively involved in the Baie Verte Volunteer Fire Department and enjoys snowmobiling, video games and hanging out with his buddies. He has excelled while working.



His parents and those around him have seen many ways in which he has developed over the past few years.

“Supported Employment has been a tremendous help in our son’s development in the world around him. He has developed an excellent work ethic and has made great progress in

communication with both company clients and co-workers. His financial skills have improved greatly. He has his own bank account and since he has been working, he has purchased his own vehicle and snowmobile, things I would have never been able to get for him,” noted his mom Mary.

Building on Interests and Strengths

Pat Feindel

Mike lives in Ladysmith, a small town of about 7,000 people on Vancouver Island. He is 19 years old and really into ‘guy things’. He likes cars and dirt bikes. He drives his own truck and dirt bike

on the family property. Mike has seizures that cannot be fully controlled with medication and he cannot tell when they are going to happen. Mike’s family wants to support him to live life to the fullest, even though they worry about his safety.

When Mike was in his last year of high school, he and his family began to wonder what he might do for a job once he finished school. They connected with Tina from Community Link, a service that works with high schools to help students with developmental disabilities plan how to get jobs and be more independent when they finish school.

When Tina asked Mike what kind of work he was interested in, he told her he loves cars and definitely wanted to do something that would involve being around cars.

It turned out that Tina had gotten to know the owners of a local gas station, who gave Mike “work experience” there, on a trial basis to try out being a “gas jockey”. He and Tina went over his resume and went for an interview, which was pretty relaxed. Mike made sure to tell the owner that he has seizures. The owner agreed to take him on, and they worked out a schedule for



Mike. He would have two shifts a week, doing a total of about three to five hours a week.

Mike was excited! He started his job learning to wash windshields, pump gas, wash cars, and sweep up the station. By his second shift, he was already greeting customers with confidence. Soon, Mike was checking oil and tire pressures, and operating the cash register. He even learned how to operate the pump head. This is beside the cash register and controls and records the amount of gas pumped at each gas pump.

One of Mike's challenges is that because of his seizures, he sometimes forgets things. There was a lot to learn in his new job at the gas station. So Mike's support worker created a booklet to help him remember how to do money transactions when customers were paying. She took photos of the cash register and debit card machine, and then put them in a booklet with numbered step-by-step instructions for how to process payments with each machine. Now, if he

gets stuck, he can check the booklet for the instructions.

After six months, Mike had shown that he was able to handle the job on his own and wanted to work more independently, without a support worker always there. But there was still a concern about having a seizure at work. Tina asked the employer if he would be willing to have Mike work on his own without constant supervision, and offered to provide seizure management training to his staff. Everyone liked the idea – Mike, his family, and his boss. It turned out that a co-worker at the gas station was interested in becoming a nurse in the future, and she agreed to the training. Community Link paid for the employee's first aid training and paid her an extra \$3 dollars per hour for her added responsibility. As a team, they came up with a response plan about what to do in case of a seizure. This arrangement has been in place for several months now and has worked really well.

Paper Butterflies

Milli Flaig-Hooper is a very accomplished paper maker, and operates her own business called "The Paper Fifrildi" (the Old Norse word for Butterfly). As someone with an intellectual disability who had experienced inclusive schooling the idea of spending her day in a segregated program (the only option available at the time) seemed a step backward. Her support network considered other options. There were no jobs available, even part-time, and volunteering somewhere was also a challenge in a rural setting.

Milli discovered her interest in papermaking during the fall of 2007 after graduating from Gimli High School, when she began experimenting



with a papermaking kit. The recycled paper reflects her creativity and each final sheet of paper is unique. All the paper used is in its original color with hardly any waste; nothing else is added, except for the occasional embellishment. Her interest and ability have grown to produce some very interesting pieces including cards, pictures for framing, earrings and fridge magnets.

The flexibility of *In the Company of Friends*, an individualized funding model, has allowed Milli to pursue her entrepreneurial endeavor and be supported in a way that makes the most sense to her and her network, ensuring that she has support where she needs it, but is free to express creativity her way!

Milli sold her first piece in 2008 at the Artists First Show in Ottawa. She received 3rd place in the experimental category at the Interlake Juried Art Show in 2011. She participates in the Interlake Artist's Studio tour twice a year as well as many arts, craft shows, and conferences. She also sells her cards at McNally Robinson Booksellers in Winnipeg, Koma Heim, and Alma's

Tearoom in Gimli.

Milli is a member of the Manitoba Crafts Council, the Winnipeg Beach Arts & Culture Co-Operative (www.watchthewave.ca), and the International Association of Hand Papermakers & Paper Artists (IAPMA). She recently became a member of Arts & Disability Network Manitoba. There have been articles written about her in the Interlake Spectator, the Enterprise News, www.cartizan.com and in the LIFE fall 2012 newsletter www.icof-life.ca/

Besides papermaking, Milli also enjoys sports, music, games shows, knitting, yoga, and a fine glass of white wine. She was the poster representative for the Manitoba Marathon in 2012 which raises funds for people with intellectual disabilities.

Milli has been able to show many people over the years that having an extra chromosome (Down syndrome) and autism should not limit your abilities. The constant for this success has been the vision that it's possible to match talent, interest, and a need in a community like any other enterprise.

Dan the Muffin Man

Arlene Wilkie & Kyla Snell

It looks like a muffin. It tastes like a muffin. It is a delicious muffin! But it is so much more than a muffin. It is a symbol of worth and independence. It knows no boundaries in the future. It is a labor of love, and a business called Dan the Muffin Man.

Its creator is Danny Wilkie. Dan is a 21-year-old man who is in the second year of transition from Unity Composite High School to supported living in a new residence. Dan's education has been supported by educational assistants, and his

educational program is guided by a personal program plan. He is dedicated to his assigned tasks of mail delivery, work experience, grocery shopping, recycling, fitness, and other jobs.

Connecting with the community has always been a goal. Dan's communication skills were once limited to one word utterances. His posture was poor, as he would shuffle his feet and watch the floor. Dan had difficulty when routines were changed and during unstructured time. Dan was socially withdrawn and tentative to meet new

people. He avoided eye and bodily contact. We were unsure if Dan had reached his full potential.

One day, during an ordinary team meeting, life changed. It was casually mentioned that maybe Dan could attempt to bake muffins to sell to local businesses. Unity businesses were surveyed to determine the interest in having muffins delivered for coffee time. Originally, six businesses responded, so in October of 2008, a weekly schedule of baking and delivering muffins began. The small idea has grown from dream to reality and has led to setting higher goals and thinking more of Dan's future sustainability in his own community.

As of January, 2010, Dan bakes and delivers to sixteen regular business clients, averaging 13 dozen muffins per week. Now that the muffin business has found such success and there is potential to expand, Dan will remain in Unity and be connected to the community in a valuable and contributing way for as long as he chooses to be.

Dan is actively involved in the process from choosing the recipe, to shopping for ingredients, to baking, to delivering, to making a deposit. The changes in Dan throughout the past two years are staggering. His confidence and comfort level with other people has developed steadily. Dan is able to walk into a business by himself, make eye contact with others, shake their hand in greeting, and communicate his needs in a clear and direct manner.



As his life skills have grown, Dan's independence has also grown. He adapts to various situations much better, accepting that people can live and do things outside their "work bubble." He is determined and focused during muffin delivery and truly enjoys interacting with his clients. Dan's confidence has increased, and he takes pride in his work. Dan has more exposure to people in the employment community, opening future opportunities. Dan not only has improved his interpersonal skills, but has also opened the community to seeing him and others with intense needs, as viable, contributing members of society.

Dan's accomplishments have not gone unnoticed. A fellow student wrote a business plan using Dan's muffin business as the subject, and with its success, shared the North West Region, 2009 Youth Business Excellence Award (YBEX) with Dan. Dan was also awarded the Living Sky School Division Student Hall of Fame

Special Project Award in June of 2009. Dan was recognized in January 2010 by the Unity Chamber of Commerce as a new business at a banquet.

Dan is a role model to other students who have a dream. He has worked hard to accomplish his goal, and he's not done yet! He hopes to run a small coffee shop some day that sells fresh baking. It will be a very busy place. Dan has had a positive impact on the lives of many people in our small town; many people who would not

have gotten to know Dan, otherwise, have taken the time to talk with him and become a part of his life. He only needs to smile to show you how much he enjoys his job!

Dan's life has a clearly defined purpose. He walks with his head held high. He makes eye contact, greets people, and lights up the world with a smile. If Dan chooses to attempt another vocation, his newly acquired confidence will make that possible.

Being My Own Boss

Shane Haddad and Catherine Rodgers



I didn't have my Grade 12 education when I went looking for a job. I wanted to work in maintenance. I did more training to try to get those jobs. I got my boiler papers, but sometimes that wasn't enough. I would apply for

jobs in fields I wanted to work in, but I didn't get hired. I didn't get dejected. I kept trying and eventually I got a job with a lawn care company.

I worked for them for a while before I decided to start my own lawn care company. I knew the work and the equipment and I liked doing it. I was around thirty then, so I have had the business for about 19 or 20 years now. I just started advertising and got my own customers and kept going from there. The work is seasonal, so it's different during the year. My favourite time of year is the spring when I get to power rake and make all the yards look good at the start of the season. It's also my most profitable time of the year.

I like owning my own business. It takes commitment. It takes time. My family is very supportive of my business. I could be making more money or spending more time at it. But there are other things in my life – like family and volunteering – that I like to have the time for too. Being my own boss gives me the freedom to make that choice.

REAL Enterprise and the Power of Parents

Peter Wilson

In the rural village of Canning, Nova Scotia, Canada, there is a small nonprofit organization called CAPRE (pronounced ká-pri) that supports the development of entrepreneurs. The acronym stands for Community Association of People for REAL Enterprise. The entrepreneurs that CAPRE supports happen to be individuals labeled as having an intellectual disability. The story of CAPRE's creation and evolution is a story of REAL enterprise and the power of parents.

In the early days, there were only two alternatives for people with intellectual disabilities: one was the sheltered workshop environment, in which many workers are involved in menial and interchangeable tasks; the other was the group-home environment, in which individuals often do little more than watch television and go on occasional outings. The Canning mothers knew that they wanted their children to be part of the community, to be valued for their contributions, and to be recognized as individuals – but how to make that happen in an existing environment where these objectives were not being widely pursued? For answers, the mothers started thinking about the possibility of their children owning and operating their own businesses.

From the earliest meetings, a vision of a model of supported enterprise began to evolve: a vision in which the development of entrepreneurs would be supported by circles of caring and knowledgeable people. These Support Circles, as they came to be known, would be composed of parents, guardians, advocates,

friends, and one-on-one support, where needed. The Support Circles would also enlist involvement from community members and local business owners. All would be involved in business planning and problem-solving for the particular entrepreneur.

CAPRE is a “community entrepreneurial development agency.” In many ways CAPRE is similar to other agencies that provide assistance to people pursuing business as an employment option, with the difference that the entrepreneurs CAPRE supports happen to be individuals labeled with an intellectual disability. Presently, CAPRE supports ten entrepreneurs in operating their own micro-businesses. Although small, these businesses have a significant, visible presence on Main Street, which enhances the appearance of economic vitality in the community, and raises awareness about the entrepreneurs as individuals and as valuable contributors to economic development in the area.

For example, with CAPRE's support, Leah Pineo has owned and operated her own laundry service in central Main Street for the past twelve years, a useful service that keeps Leah busy, engaged and learning, while generating enough revenue to cover her operating expenses. Judy Van Amerongen likes to point out that Leah obtained her largest customer, a massage therapy clinic, by providing a higher quality service than the national linen company that formerly held the contract!

Further up the street, Lee Van Amerongen has owned and operated Lee's Shop since 2001, also with CAPRE's support. Lee started out making cookie painting kits, an activity he enjoys, and which have been sold all over the world. Because the store's offerings have grown and evolved over the years, Lee recently rebranded his shop under a banner that reads, “Ethnic and Local Emporium.” This relates to his varied

inventory of local arts and crafts, along with jewellery, textiles, and novelties from Uganda, Kenya, India, and Sri Lanka.

Across the street from Lee's Shop, Michael Fisher has been a co-operator in a store-front enterprise called Fisher Sheffield & Co. since 1999, selling a combination of used clothing and hand-sewn crafts. Mike also offers a mail and lunch delivery service in the mornings, along with a waste management service for the Village of Canning along Main Street, as well as a dog walking service once a week. These seemingly disparate activities all combine into a varied business that suits Mike's energetic personality and desire for variety throughout his day.

Back at the CAPRE main offices, which are also prominently located on Main Street, Brendon Purdy-Smith has recently established Mr. B.'s Enterprises, sharing some of the facilities on a temporary basis. Here Brendon produces and sells hand-crafted, fresh and nutritional pet treats, as well as a line of vibrant, hand-made tie-dyed t-shirts. Brendon is presently well on his way to establishing a promising business model, and he is now receiving considerable interest in his t-shirts, in particular, from retail store owners and shoppers at local farm markets that Brendon attends with CAPRE's support.

Because all four of these entrepreneurs are high-needs individuals, CAPRE has arranged to provide one-on-one business and personal support in these instances. Other entrepreneurs are supported through the provision of business planning, dissemination of information, networking, office services, and referrals. These entrepreneurs include Tracy Sheffield, Jason Bennett, Mike Murphy, Kim and Tony Legere, Fred Phillips, and Daylen Solomon.

Another entrepreneur, folk-art painter Jeffrey Halliday, can be considered as CAPRE's first graduate. A participant since 2005, CAPRE helped Jeffrey organize the business side of his budding career as an artist, and helped him to obtain a small business start-up grant that allowed him to purchase art supplies. CAPRE also helped document his work by taking digital photographs and recording details about each piece he produced, while helping to initiate contact with potential art dealers. Jeffrey now has his own independent art dealer, and sells everything he paints. Two years ago, Jeffrey was received by the Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia during an exhibition of his work at Province House, and he was recently interviewed about his art for the CBC television series *Land and Sea*. A successful entrepreneur, indeed!



A Job like Everybody Else

Rachel Germain

La Fringale, a preschool and school catering service has employed Gabriel Lemieux, an adult with Down syndrome, for the past 3 years. Pierre-Étienne Vachon is its Executive Director.

“At the time we were not specifically looking for an employee with an intellectual disability, says Mr. Vachon. We chose Gabriel after reviewing our needs. Gabriel’s position is essential for our company. We had had difficulties filling it for several years. Even when we found somebody, they tended to leave after a short while. Since this position is important for the good operation of our business, we needed to find somebody who would be proud of his job and devoted to it. These values are hard to find nowadays. ÉquiTravail contacted us and after their presentation we realized that their offer met our needs: somebody committed and proud to work for us. Gabriel has been with us for several years and honestly, his services are essential.”

“We had some experience with employees recovering from depression or diagnosed with combined anxiety and mood disorders, but we had never had somebody like Gabriel. I would not say we were worried, but we were wary of the unknown. We had never had this experience before so we did not know what to expect. At La Fringale respect is a basic value. Before Gabriel started work, it was essential that all employees understood the issues Gabriel faced and that we ensured he was treated with respect and received support.”

We received support from ÉquiTravail and from Gabriel’s workers. His mother provided the best support. We are very respectful of her work. Without his mother’s support we would not have been able to focus our actions on Gabriel’s progress. The various stakeholders who in my

opinion have very limited resources are not able to present the situation in all the details and help us make our relationship with Gabriel a win-win situation.

With help from Gabriel’s supporters, mainly ÉquiTravail and his mother, we learned the basics of supporting people with intellectual disabilities. In short: structure, framework, discipline, positive reinforcement adapted to his individual situation. We worked on adapting management tools with specific objectives that Gabriel could recognize and that would help him make progress.

Gabriel has worked with La Fringale for 3 years on a full time basis, Monday to Friday. “I do the dishes, take the garbage and the recycling out, clean the coolers, the belts and I do household chores”, says Gabrielle. “Doing the dishes is my favourite task,” he adds. “I get along well with



all my co-workers and they included me right away. I am very happy to be part of the team.”

Professionally, Gabriel is a hard worker and brings a lot to our company, says Mr. Vachon. His position is very important for our organization and his role is essential for the good operation of our production and our corporate image with our clients.

There are many examples of Gabriel’s inclusion as part of our workforce, but the one that makes us laugh is when I tease him about the Montreal Canadiens. You need to know that the Montreal Canadiens are a big part of Gabriel’s life and they dictate his mood for the day. I often listen

to the game results to find out if Gabriel is going to be in a good mood on a particular day! I was teasing him when he suddenly said: “Pierre-Étienne, you are fired!” I still smile when I think about it! It takes courage to fire your Executive Director!

For an employer thinking about hiring an individual with intellectual disabilities, I would advise that they first, listen and learn to understand the person. They may teach you a few things about life. Ensure that the work environment you provide meets their abilities and expectations. Finally if you are doing this to get a subsidy or to find cheap employees, you did not understand anything!

The Road to Independence

Suzanne Jones and Kevin Brennan

Kevin’s road to independence has taken longer than one would like and not without its share of challenges. Kevin believed in his goal of finding employment and had tremendous support from his family. Through perseverance and a lot of determination he now considers himself to be living independently.

Kevin’s journey to gainful employment and eventual independence began back in 2007. He found himself 18 years old, out of school, diagnosed with a learning disability and a severe speech impediment. He was living in the rural community of Pleasant View, P.E.I at that time with very limited job skills. There was an absence of any public transportation and Kevin had no driver’s license. The prospects for meaningful employment within his surrounding community were not promising.

In the fall of that year with the help of his family Kevin made the decision to relocate to the city of Summerside P.E.I. Summerside is a small city of approximately 15,000 people and is 75 km from his home. He would, initially, be living away from the security of his family in a dimly lit basement apartment that was far from luxury. This was not an issue for Kevin because it was the beginning of a new life filled with the promise of freedom and the independence that he so craved.

Within a short time after his move Kevin was introduced to Community Connections. This is an organization that helps individuals living with intellectual disabilities to develop to their full potential. For some people it may mean being supported with life skills while for others their focus is centered on employment opportunities.

With the support of this organization Kevin was able to secure a part-time position with a local restaurant preparing food. It would only provide him with a minimal amount of hours but it gave him much needed job skills and allowed him to work alongside of his peers.

Even though Kevin had a lot of difficulty communicating his thoughts he was able to work effectively and took great pride in his abilities. Kevin was not willing to let his learning disability or his speech impediment discourage him from his dream of true independence. During the two years that he was employed with this company he was able to form some lasting friendships that are still very important to him today.

Unfortunately, it becomes very difficult for people with disabilities to achieve full-time positions. Not to mention one's that come with a pay rate that will support independent living. Kevin was no exception in this matter because even though he loved his work he knew his part-time hours would never be enough to provide him with the things that he wanted out of life.

While employed with this company Kevin was able to maintain his involvement with Community Connections. He was still attending their program on a regular basis while employed with the restaurant.

In June 2010 the organization introduced a program called "Links and Bridges". This was a 16 week program where the focus was directed towards exposure to the workforce and developing the tools they would need to secure employment. Through "Links and Bridges" Kevin was able to make connections with local businesses that were willing to

give him the opportunity to challenge his work skills. The intent of the various job exposures was to introduce Kevin to different employers and different experiences. The objective was that it might lead to a full-time position.

In August of that year Kevin began on a volunteer basis with a local company "Fiber Connections". Fiber Connections is an innovative manufacturer of custom active and passive optical connectivity and media conversion solutions to an international market. He was to work with other employees in a training capacity to determine if he was a match for the position. With Kevin's bright, friendly, and always positive personality he began a full-time position with the company just two months after his initial training began.

During this period Community Connections was in the process of constructing accessible, affordable, and supported housing. These apartments were designed with the purpose of people living independently as possible and being interdependent within their community. Kevin fit the criteria very easily. He was now motivated, employed full-time and very capable of independent living. He moved into his new apartment in the new year of 2010. He absolutely loves his bright, new apartment, his new life, and the independence that comes with being employed full-time.



Kevin has worked hard to achieve meaningful success in his life story. Sometimes it takes many hands to achieve one's dream but with the support of his family, friends, and community he is now "living the dream" as they say!

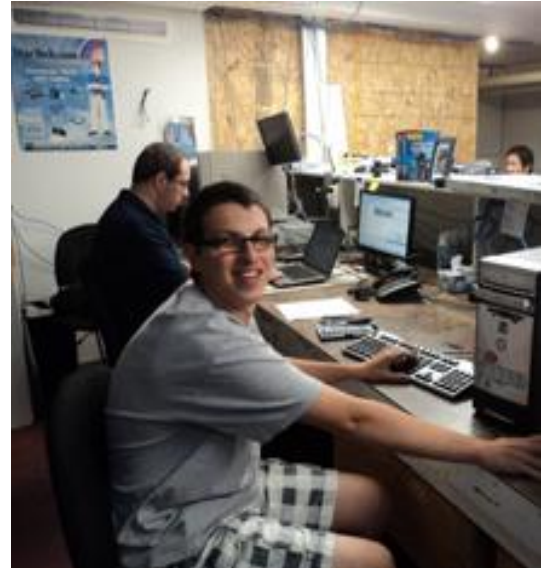
Timmins Business Benefits as Student Explores IT Field

Michelle Strutzenberger

Lucid Networks Corp., a Timmins information technology (IT) company, might be better prepared to meet a projected need for workers in the IT field in the coming years, thanks in part to its mentorship of a young man who has an intellectual disability this past summer. Lucid Networks IT service manager Ted Gooch agreed to take on mentoring Theriault High School student Sam Migneault after he was approached by Cristy Webb, a co-ordinator with the Passport Mentoring Initiative in Timmins.

The Passport Mentoring initiative involves students who have an intellectual disability investigating ideas for their future, by working with mentors who share the same interest or hold the role that the student wishes to explore.

Gooch, who returned to school at 36 to study IT after leaving a job in automobile repairs, says he was very interested in providing leadership to Migneault, who is obviously keen about the field. “There’s going to be a great need in this field in the next few years, so I thought it was a great idea to get somebody who is younger involved and find out if it’s something they want to do, after getting their feet wet,” says Gooch. Gooch met with Migneault one hour a week for about eight weeks, providing him with in-depth and hands-on learning about things such as the difference between Macs and PCs, fixing a router and creating an Internet cable. Webb, who checked in frequently, says she was amazed by what Migneault learned, noting part of his learning involved taking apart an old computer of hers, fixing it and putting it back together.



Webb suggests the one-to-one teaching and support from a committed business person was invaluable, as compared to taking a computer class or even doing a placement.

Gooch says he was also very encouraged by the leaps Migneault took in learning. He’s since been very forthright in encouraging Migneault to look into college courses that can help him along the way into a career in IT. Migneault says he is interested in doing this, noting he enjoyed the whole experience and found Gooch “fun to work with.” But while Lucid Networks was educating Migneault and likely strengthening the IT workforce of the future, it was also educating and preparing itself, according to Gooch. Like many people, Migneault has unique needs requiring unique leadership skills, Gooch notes. “It was a great opportunity for me to learn best practices on how to provide that leadership for him, to make him feel more comfortable in our environment,” says Gooch. If the IT field does face a worker shortage as is projected, companies that are prepared to work with people who have the IT skills but may require additional unique support will likely have the edge. Lucid Networks appears to be on its way in that respect.

The Starbuckian

Joanne Porayko

In January 2012, Chris came to the Challenge Disability Resource Group as a young man (in his 20s) with an intellectual disability and with very little work experience. While he had been out of school for several years, other than part time jobs, he had been unable to secure regular meaningful employment. Based on Chris's desire to become better prepared to enter and stay in the workforce, he enrolled in the Employability Skills Program of Challenge. During this 9-week program, Chris gained particular work related skills.

By the time he had finished the 9-week program, with ongoing support from Challenge, he had secured a work placement at the local Starbucks coffee shop. He began this placement with support from a full time job coach, and with full wage subsidy. It is also important to note that Chris saw working at Starbucks as his 'dream job'. He spoke at length of wanting to be a 'starbuckian'.

He fast became a fully included member of the team at Starbucks. Not long after he began his job, it was apparent that he no longer needed full time job coach support. Within 6 months the employer had taken Chris on to their payroll 100%. Chris no longer required a full time job coach (although Challenge will still sometimes drop by to ensure that everything is okay). Chris is currently working 5 half days per week, and is optimistic that as the opportunity arises he will be employed on a full time basis.



Work Program makes 'Immeasurable' Difference

Kelly Cormier

Matt St. Onge is like many young men his age; he enjoys playing video games and hanging out with his friends.

St. Onge, 21, from Fredericton holds down two part-time jobs, hopes to move out on his own soon, and dreams of one day being an actor or doing voice-over work. That likely would not be possible if not for the help he's received from

the New Brunswick Association for Community Living (NBACL). St. Onge has Asperger's syndrome, an autism spectrum disorder. His mother, Janet St. Onge, said he's ambitious and wants a lot out of life.

'He had a hard time growing up,' she said. 'He was picked on because he was different, but he seems to be a stronger kid for it. He's learned to

adapt.' Janet said when Matt was in Grade 9, a teacher suggested he might have Asperger's. It was after that he got a proper diagnosis; he had earlier been told he had ADHD. She said after the diagnosis, it became easier to deal with Matt's behaviour, as they knew how to better react to it.

Janet said when Matt was in high school he became involved with the NBACL. The non-profit organization provides help through a variety of programs to individuals who have an intellectual disability and their families. 'The difference in him is immeasurable,' she said.

Matt works Wednesday mornings at the Marysville Circle K and three days a week at the law firm McInnes Cooper. 'At the Circle K I do a lot of different stuff,' he said. 'I clean the gas

pumps. I also sweep up around the little island outside. Inside, usually I do some front-facing (of products on the shelves). On occasion I mop the floors and occasionally clean the bathroom.' Matt does typical office work at the law firm.

'I stack the printing papers, fill the printers with paper, all kinds of things,' he said. 'And I also sometimes go around to the different offices and collect blue bins to take paper to the shredder.' He said it probably wouldn't have been as easy for him to get the job without the help he received from the NBACL. He's also come out of his shell enough to participate in Best Buddies, a program that matches students and people with intellectual disabilities in a one-to-one friendship. Matt has been on the executive for two years.

He's quick to give NBACL a lot of credit. 'It (the program) helped me socialize with people a lot more,' he said. 'It allowed me to get all the necessary stuff I needed in order to get a job.' Jon Lister is a transitional facilitator with NBACL and works with Matt.

'Matt began with the New Brunswick Association for Community Living through the transition to work program. That starts in high school and the goal is to build essential job skills and upon graduation, hopefully, there's a better chance for securing employment,' said Lister.

'The program helps with soft skills, job readiness skills. That covers workplace culture and behaviour.' In the second semester in Grade 12, he was placed on a co-op placement and that provides the work



experience to help reinforce those job-readiness skills, Lister said.

'We approach the employers by saying that Matt's had this training prior, he'll come to work and learn the job. Support is provided when they're in the workplace.' Although Matt participated in the program through high school, he wasn't ready for a permanent job placement.

'Matt ended up graduating without having a work placement and just kind of sitting in his basement playing video games, not being active in the community and then he was selected as a participant in our workplace demonstration project that we did,' Lister said.

'That was a pilot project that we had run in a few different spots in the province. We ran one in Fredericton in Value Village. There were five participants. Matt was one of those participants. It was six weeks. One week in class for soft skills training and then five weeks on the job training.

'Matt had a little further to go, so he wasn't able to be hired by Value Village, but he made so much progress, just great progress in terms of socializing, appropriate work behaviour and

managing his frustrations.' Lister said after Matt's Value Village experience, NBACL decided to team up with Jobs Unlimited to continue trying to find him a suitable job placement.

'Jobs Unlimited got him work placement at the Circle K and he helped out with the mailbag at Jobs Unlimited. At that point, an opportunity came up at McInnes Cooper. They wanted to hire somebody for light office cleaning,' Lister said.

'Matt was given this opportunity. I went down to help him become more comfortable in his role. That took a little time. It's a new place.' Lister said Duska Frink at McInnes Cooper went above and beyond in helping Matt become comfortable in his workplace environment, and he now has a steady job helping out at the law firm.

'She was great. She called me and would brainstorm. That went so far in helping Matt become successful in that workplace. The entire staff at McInnes Cooper took him in. It was just Matt becoming comfortable with the place and the place allowing him to become comfortable to do his job well. All the credit goes to McInnes Cooper and Matt himself,' Lister said.

The AACL/Rotary Employment Partnership

A winning employer/employee team is a potent example of what's being achieved through Alberta Association for Community Living and its Rotary Employment Partnership. One of the individuals benefitting from the partnership is Dave Watchel who works at A-Plus Machining in Lloydminster. When asked what he likes about working at A-Plus he answers, "I like everything, I get something new to do every day."

Glenn DeSchover, owner of the machine shop and a Rotarian in Lloydminster hired Watchel through the AACL/ Rotary Employment Partnership seven years ago. A decision he is happy he made. "Dependable, enthusiastic, punctual and determined," are all words he uses to describe Watchel's work style at the busy machine shop. "I was looking for someone who

could get the extra work done,” explains DeSchover. “And I couldn’t find anyone.”

That situation dramatically changed when he tapped into the Rotary Employment Partnership and was introduced to Watchel.

“Dave came along and he has been phenomenal,” says Deschover. “He started out part-time but within two weeks he became a full-time employee.”

Adding, “He is an incredible worker. He basically does anything for anyone when they need a hand.”

“I’d like to have Dave participate in the machinist apprenticeship program,” says his understandably proud boss. “He’s one of my best employees. I could hire four or five more like him.” Through its Inclusive Post Secondary Education efforts, AACL is now exploring the possibility of adults with developmental disabilities being included in apprenticeship and industry training.

Part of the success behind the Rotary Employment Partnership model is the focus of the Rotarians and their Clubs on creating meaningful employment. This worldwide “Service above Self” organization has, as its mandate, five avenues of service; one of which is vocational. This means Rotarians are encouraged to serve others and make a difference in their communities through their vocations and a commitment to high ethical standards. Since the inception of the Rotary Employment Partnership Rotarians have enthusiastically embraced the idea of creating employment opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities.

AACL’s new Rotary Employment Partnership Provincial Coordinator is Julian Di Castri. “I’m a



former educator passionately committed to the AACL/Rotary Employment Partnership,” says Di Castri. Leading a team of motivated coordinators located across the province, Di Castri envisions expanding the Rotary Employment Partnership well beyond its current operations in Edmonton, Grande Prairie, Calgary, Lloydminster and Red Deer.

With nearly 200 jobs created to date and with Dave Watchel as a shining example of the possibilities when employers open their doors to people with developmental disabilities there is perhaps no limit to the number of meaningful jobs that could be created in Alberta.

And thanks to the Employment Partnership between AACL and Rotary Clubs and Districts in Alberta, more and more employers will have the opportunity to do just that.

London Law Firm Employs 24 People who have a Disability

Natalie Hamilton

Cohen Highley LLP hasn't looked back since hiring a person who has a disability 18 years ago. In fact, the London-based agency has embraced dozens of additional opportunities to create an inclusive workforce. Cohen Highley, which provides professional legal services on an agency basis for corporate counsel, law firms and sole practitioners, now employs 24 people who have a disability. "Our firm is very supportive of hiring people with disabilities," Cohen Highley partner Joe Hoffer says.

"It has been a great experience for us." Working with Community Living London has been key, Hoffer says. The first employee the firm hired continues to perform administrative duties and greet clients. Community Living London initially helped define her job role and still provides support to the firm as it expands its workforce.

"We as employers don't have the knowledge or experience to identify these things," Hoffer says. "They (Community Living London) did an excellent job of identifying tasks a supported individual would be performing."

While Hoffer may not have been directly involved in the firm's first hire; he has since become an advocate for inclusive workplaces. Hoffer

received a Queen's Diamond Jubilee medal for his contribution during a gala ceremony at Roy Thomson Hall in Toronto in June. The Ontario Disability Employment Network (ODEN) also named Hoffer to its Champions League for his role in employing people who have an intellectual disability.



"It's just a firm belief it's a positive thing to do for other people," Hoffer says of his motivation.

"In Ontario, we recognize we have a lot of personal resources. Not everyone has the personal resources we do."

Employing people who have a disability offers them an equal opportunity to grow, Hoffer notes. "This can be duplicated for many people so you do it.

The Beverage Station

Adam, Chris and Megan are young adults, in their first years in the workforce. They have found it a challenge to find work that is interesting, regular and that allows them to develop skills that can be used to get better at a variety of jobs. Adam and Chris have part-time jobs but they were looking for more work. Megan has just finished high school.

During the summer of 2012, they became their own employers with the creation of the Beverage Station, a outdoor stall where they sold drinks while a partner company, Wiseguy Foods, offered lunchtime fare. The business was located on a patio next to the Association for Community Living's building. Five days a week, customers got their food and drinks and enjoyed lunch at the patio tables.

With the assistance of a job coach (funded by private donations), they ran the whole operation: stocking supplies, serving, counting their earnings, and dealing with recycling. As their own bosses, Adam, Chris and Megan had to be responsible and customer-oriented to make their business work. The weather was wonderful and warm and there were good crowds (and good sales). They closed up shop for the winter and each took home their share of the profit.

Employment isn't always working for someone else. The Beverage Station created a great interactive business opportunity that built financial, planning and social skills. All three continue to have other employment for the winter and are bringing their entrepreneurial experiences to their jobs which makes them better employees.



Canadian Association for Community Living / People First of Canada

Position Statement on Employment

Working-age adults with intellectual disabilities, regardless of perceived level of disability, must have choice and opportunity to earn a living through paid employment in the open labour market. For employment opportunities to be meaningful working-age adults with intellectual disabilities require appropriate employment-related supports and job accommodation as needed. Employment rates and compensation must be commensurate with that of people without disabilities.

Our Vision: Achieve employment equality

Working-age adults with intellectual disabilities are employed at the same rate as the general population.

Benchmarks to measure progress:

1. Employment rates for people with intellectual disabilities are equal to that of the national average.
2. People with intellectual disabilities do not face financial or other disincentives to seek and maintain employment.
3. Employers are taking leadership in advancing the employment of people with intellectual disabilities.
4. People with intellectual disabilities and employers have the supports needed to establish and maintain inclusive workplaces.
5. People with intellectual disabilities are equally represented in both unionized workplaces and non-unionized workplaces.

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The stories in this booklet have been collected from community organizations across the country. Some have been previously published. Several have been shortened and/or otherwise edited due to space requirements.