

ready, willing, & able

volume 4, March 2014



people with intellectual disabilities
creating an inclusive labour force



50 years
ans

Canadian Association
for Community Living

Association canadienne pour
l'intégration communautaire

Diversity includes. On se ressemble.



The Ready, Willing and Able (RWA) Initiative, a partnership between the Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL), its provincial / territorial associations and the Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance (CASDA), is designed to increase labour force participation of people with developmental disabilities, and thereby advance economic productivity and social inclusion in Canada. The RWA initiative has received financial support from the Government of Canada (as announced in the 2014 Budget) for a three-year Pilot Project and this project, within the next several months, will become active in at least 20 communities throughout the country.

RWA recognizes that working age adults with developmental disabilities can and should become, in meaningful ways, members of Canada's labour force. It is an initiative that addresses the unacceptable reality that today in Canada, only 1 in 4 working aged adults with developmental disabilities is employed in the paid work force. As an initiative it recognizes that with appropriate support, community investment and employer leadership, adults with developmental disabilities

could join the labour force at rates similar to other Canadians.

We know that adults with developmental disabilities are ready and willing to accept paid employment. What must now happen is to get employers to better understand the value of hiring people with developmental disabilities. We must help employers see that increased recruitment of people with developmental disabilities could address their current labour shortages. RWA will focus on providing better bridges between employer demand and the labour supply as represented by people with intellectual disabilities.

This booklet is a part of the national Ready Willing and Able Initiative. This booklet presents stories of successful employment collected from provinces and territories across this country, and told from the perspective of employees, employers and families. These stories demonstrate that people with developmental disabilities can indeed be productive and contributory members of the paid labour force in this country.

The logo consists of a purple square containing the text "ready, willing & able" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font. The words are stacked vertically: "ready," on the first line, "willing" on the second line, and "&able" on the third line.

Ready, Willing and Able works to increase capacity and confidence within the employer sector at a local, regional and national level. Such enhanced capacity increases the value of and demand for people with intellectual disabilities as employees. Through Ready, Willing & Able, employers are given knowledge, resources and tools through targeted public awareness, peer-to-peer workshops, mentoring, HR strategies, guides on workplace accommodations, and other tools. These outcomes will be achieved through targeted dissemination, online resources and social marketing, and ultimately will increase employer capacity to find, hire, support and maintain employees with intellectual disabilities.

For further information on RWA see: www.readywillingandable.ca

Amanda's Success Story

Dayna Kneeland

I am grateful for the opportunity to meet with Amanda Billett to hear about her employment experiences. Not only is Amanda's story inspiring but she also has some great advice to offer job seekers.

Amanda works as a full time dishwasher at Simon Fraser University's dining hall, a large cafeteria open 24 hours a day for students on campus. Amanda shared that her work is demanding. She says "You need to physically have the energy to do it and also constantly be thinking about which dishes to wash first. You have to work as a team and be prepared for stress because when you work in a kitchen each cook wants their dishes to be washed first so there are a lot of people to please."

When I asked Amanda what she likes most about her job she shared that she loves her co-workers and providing service to the students. She feels a

sense of accomplishment that she can keep up with such a challenging job. Finally she added "this job is never boring, there is always a lot to do".

Amanda found the posting for her job on Craigslist and applied for it herself. Amanda had previous work experience and people who helped her learn how to apply for a job. She had learned how to write a resume, look for jobs online, and apply for a job by sending an employer her resume through an email. She had learned how to prepare for an interview: what to wear, what to say, how to act. Finally, Amanda told me that she had a network of people that she could ask for help when she needed it.

Amanda has some great advice to pass on to other job seekers. First, try your best. If you need support don't be afraid to ask for help because that's how you build your confidence. There are many ways to look for work. You can look online but don't be afraid to dress up nicely and go out into your community and talk to employers and give them your resume. Finally, be really open to a lot of different types of jobs but if you aren't comfortable about something don't be afraid to speak up about it.

When I asked Amanda what her dream job in the future might be she had great perspectives to share.

"I'm still young. There are a lot of possibilities and when you are young you are still searching to discover your dreams. One day I'd like to be out there speaking more to people maybe in customer service or sales. For now, this job will do and I'm happy."

Thank you, Amanda for sharing your story with us and for passing on all of your great advice.



Amanda hard at work at Simon Fraser University

Story originally posted by Spectrum Consulting's Alternatives in Employment in e-newsletter 101friends.ca

Finding the Right Person for the Job



The high traffic McDonald's in Montague had an opening for a Crew Member. Ideally, they were looking for a candidate who was outgoing, energetic and who had great customer service skills. They needed someone to act as an ambassador; someone who could represent the company well to its customers. It didn't take long to match those skills sets with Colton Matheson.

Colton is 16 years old and attending grade 10 at Montague Regional High School. He is also very well known within his small community. More importantly for this story, he was well known to the management of the Montague McDonald's. The restaurant has a long-standing commitment to hiring a diverse work force and when the vacancy occurred, management immediately thought of Colton as a potential candidate.

Colton has now completed his training and is working Saturdays during the busy lunch hour from 11:30 to 1:00. He is learning quickly and is mastering the duties he's been assigned. He enjoys working

with his peers and says that everyone is nice and are hard workers. His main duties include greeting customers and cleaning the dining room. After only a couple of days on the job, he has increased his duties and is now stocking and refilling behind the counter. Colton said the best parts of the job are the Fries and the pay cheque. He is saving up his pay for a pair of cowboy boots, black drum kit and eventually a side by side.

When Colton is not working, you can be sure that customers are asking if he's working today and recognize when he's not there. Colton is hoping that he can increase his hours in the summer time.

Colton spends a lot of his spare time practicing his music and plans on recording a music CD next month. Having this part time job (and hopefully summer employment) will give Colton much valuable work experience and greatly assist him in making decisions for his post school career, whatever that may be.

A Taste of Success

Christy McLean

There was a point when Nathan Holt thought he would never get to experience the taste of success.

As a high school student, he felt he had very few options for his future. When asked about how he felt about college during high school, Nathan says, “I never thought about it. I thought I couldn’t go.”

Enter Catrina Townes, Transition Facilitator for the New Brunswick Association for Community Living. Through the Transition to Work program, high school students are matched with employers in the community where they learn skills and gain work experience.

“I first met Nathan in 2011 when he was in grade 11. At that time, he seemed to be afraid of his own shadow,” she says.

Together, the two explored his interests and discovered that cooking was at the top of Nathan’s list.

“I always like cooking with my sister. We make deserts and I am really good at it,” he says.

Through NBACL’s Transition to Work program, Catrina arranged for Nathan to do a co-op placement at a restaurant in St. George, New Brunswick.

“On the first day of his co-op, he was so nervous, he wouldn’t even touch the stove,” she says.

Eventually, Nathan began to gain new skills through his placement and this experience fueled his passion to learn more. He enrolled and was accepted in the Culinary Arts Program at the New Brunswick Community College in St. Andrews.

“The first day was really scary! I was scared and excited, too,” he says. “I made lots of friends. One of my friends was scared too and we made each other feel better and brave enough to try,” he says.

“I feel better now by practicing a lot and cooking better and better. I still get scared, but I tell myself, ‘Just give it a shot and don’t give up!’”

Nathan will be graduating in June.

The academic part of his program is modified and the practical part is unmodified,” says Catrina. “He is doing really well academically, but he is earning top marks in the practical.”

Recently, Nathan’s new found confidence inspired him to compete in the Intramural Canadian National Skills Competition where he placed 4th overall, beating out his classmates and other certified chefs. He will be doing his practicum in April of this year and will be graduating in June at which time he hopes to land a job.

“I’m going to keep cooking for people. I want to cook in a restaurant and make people good food.”



Jessica, The Ideal Employee



Jessica Stepic has two part time jobs. Her employers describe her as a smart young woman, fast learner, conscientious, punctual and say that she continues to excel at her jobs. She has a near photographic memory, demonstrates excellent customer service, handles cash with ease and takes responsibility very seriously. Oh, and she has Autism.

Jessica is one of many young adults who were children during the era when early intervention was becoming recognized as best practice. Hers is the first generation to have had access to therapy from childhood through to adulthood. Her initial prognosis stated that she might not ever speak, be toilet trained or lead an independent life. Her family believes that prayer, patience, parent advocacy, perseverance and people who care were the secret ingredients to Jessica's success.

Society for Treatment of Autism has had the privilege of being a part of Jessica's life through the years. She accessed Speech-Language Pathology and Psychological consultation and assessments, summer social groups, and recently attended courses provided by Society for Treatment of Autism's adolescent and adult program, Pursuits and Recruits. Jessica learned skills related to getting and keeping a job, including practicing interviewing, navigating work-related social dynamics, and conflict resolution. Following the employment workshops, Jessica had two work experience placements, with the second resulting in her job at A Little Somethin' Café. Here, she often greets customers by name, and quietly and efficiently goes about her day. Jessica's success in this position has led her to her second job at Toujours, on the University of Calgary campus.

Pursuits and Recruits offer programs for 2.5 hours per week over 11 weekly sessions and due to the generosity of the Sinneave Family Foundation, these programs are free of charge, and anyone who is 13 or older with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorders is eligible. The program offerings include a work skills curriculum, volunteer group, skills for life to promote independence, employment preparation and five work experience sites.

While Pursuits and Recruits has only been running for three years, Society for Treatment of Autism has been in operation in Alberta for nearly forty years, serving families and those with ASD, regardless of their functioning level. The agency has served hundreds of families in that time, many like Jessica who were three years old when they were introduced to the professionals of Society for Treatment of Autism, only to re-engage in services later as they grew up. Jessica's success is simply one example of how hard work by a dedicated team of parents and professionals pays off.

Autism Nova Scotia: Support Means Success

Autism Works is proud of each client who puts effort into reaching their maximum potential. “Working with the same clients on a weekly basis allows me to see their growth. As I work with them, I can see their progress from the beginning and it is very fulfilling for both me and the client,” says Michelle Furlong, Employment Support Coach for Autism Nova Scotia.

Every position, paid or volunteer, serves a purpose and can be a success story. Here are three of those stories:

Holly Nauss has been part of the Autism Works program for several years. She has worked at Zellers and now works with The Promise of a Pearl. “I love having a job a lot and it means so much to

me,” says Holly. “I have a busy schedule and I love going to work every day. That is very important to me.” During her time with the Promise, she has learned many new skills including time management, customer service and how to work collaboratively in a team. She makes jewellery, counts inventory and takes part in craft shows to promote and sell the jewellery.

“Holly is a great worker. She does everything that is asked of her and then more. She works very well with her co-workers and is a very valuable employee,” says Chelsea DeGiobbi, Employment Coordinator for Autism Nova Scotia.

Holly also works part-time at Sobeys. She stocks shelves, cleans aisles and various other duties as assigned to her. She is very friendly and helpful to customers and her co-workers.

“Holly has worked here at Sobeys for the last 5 years and is a member of the Sobeys family. She is well known to all who shop here, very friendly and enjoys talking to all the young children that are shopping with their families. She is very social and comes to all events that are hosted by Sobeys. Holly is always on time and is very reliable (cannot remember the last time she called in sick). Holly knows what is expected of her, and is always willing to do a little extra when asked. Overall Holly is a valued member of the Sobeys team,” says Christine Giles, Sobeys Front End Manager.

Justin has been involved with the Autism Works program since its beginning. We secured him employment working part-time at Stone Hearth Bakery. Some of his duties include mopping, washing dishes, dusting and making bagels.

“I like being around people. It’s a nice job and I want to keep working there,” says Justin regarding his work at the bakery. He is very well liked by his managers and co-workers. “Everyone at the bakery really likes working with Justin. He has worked



Holly



Justin

here for years and he follows direction well. We can always ask him to do extra tasks if needed. He is very friendly, and I always enjoy my conversations with him," says Maggie LaPierre, Bakery Manager.

He also volunteers at Salvation Army once a week. He sorts store items, bags clothing and helps maintain cleanliness of the store. "I work hard putting clothes away and bagging clothes to go to other stores," says Justin. He is very social and talks with his co-workers on breaks. During his spare time he enjoys walking with his respite worker and using his computer.

Victoria Cutler is very busy with work, but she still finds time to volunteer as well. She has worked at the Seaport Market selling Promise of a Pearl jewellery, and has improved her customer service skills during this time. She also works at Point Pleasant Child Care Centre where she reads stories to the children and makes arts and crafts. "There are a lot of things I like about work. I like working with friends and enjoy the fellowship of being there. I find work interesting and fun," says Victoria. She has developed a great connection with the children and the staff.

"Victoria has added so much joy to our Early Childhood Centre. She arrives with a smile every day. Victoria has become not only a part of our community but our family. We can't imagine her not being here. We are an inclusive learning environment and so it is important that our team of employees and volunteers reflect that diversity as well. Victoria is a not only a positive role model our children with autism but for all the children in our care. She feels proud of the work she does here and we are proud of her," says Leanne Fletcher, Inclusion Coordinator / Assistant Director, from Point Pleasant Child Care Centre. When not working or volunteering, Victoria enjoys singing and reading, especially mystery novels.

Our clients and employers work together to create a positive experience for everyone. "I enjoy meeting new people and working with existing clients. Every day is different and very rewarding," says Furlong. The Autism Works team is certain there will be more success stories in the future, thanks to determined clients and dedicated employers.



Victoria

AACL Rotary Employment Partnership: 275 jobs & counting

ATB Financial has an asset that's proving invaluable to this thriving Alberta-based bank. His name is Cody Strass.

Cody is a workplace assistant at ATB's headquarters in Edmonton working alongside 600 other employees. Cody and the other individuals with developmental disabilities hired by ATB are an integral part of this Alberta based financial institution, with assets of \$33.7 billion and more than 5,000 associates that help more than 662,000 customers in 242 Alberta communities.

Cody has had the benefit of the Alberta Association for Community Living (AACL) advocacy since childhood to support his inclusive education and then his inclusive post-secondary education. He was hired by ATB through the AACL Rotary Employment Partnership, Cody's position allows his work and personal skills to shine, making him a valuable employee.

Dave Mowat, President and CEO of ATB, and Cody recently shared their experience of working together in front of audiences of over 400 people, who were inspired not only by Cody's successful employment but by the friendship that has developed between

the two. Dave is quick to point out that Cody has a better capacity to remember names than he does and how helpful this is when as the President of the company he may struggle with the name of one of the hundreds of employees at the bank's headquarters – now he can turn to Cody for help. Adding, "And we have high expectations; it's not like we give him a free pass {because he has a disability}.

A young man with a great sense of humour Cody loves to workout, play golf, and support the Edmonton Eskimos football team. He knows his way around the Eskimos having introduced Dave to all the cheerleaders, while all Dave could do was introduce Cody to the Mayor and the President of the Eskimos. Previously employed at an Edmonton golf course for six years, Cody had established a track record as a reliable employee who completes each and every assigned task well but who now wanted yearlong employment and new challenges.

As part of his duties at ATB Financial (with the support of its department of People & Culture) Cody greets customers and associates as they arrive for appointments. Cody also manages the boardroom setup on the 10th and 16th floors.

Complementing these duties Cody has a variety of other administrative tasks such as mail pickup and delivery, supporting special events in the building, and general support for the ATB Financial executive team.

This successful workplace partnership underscores ATB's commitment to creating an inclusive and innovative workplace. It's yet another factor in this high profile financial institution being named as one of Canada's top 100 employers in 2014.

As for Cody his words are short but heartfelt. "Thanks to AACL and ATB for this opportunity."



Cody Strass and Dave Mowat, President & CEO - ATB

Successful Employment at 17 Wing

Since 2001 SCE LifeWorks and 17 Wing have partnered together to support employees labeled with a developmental or learning disability to be successful in employment at the Junior Ranks Mess. For Kailee Friesen and Aaron Forrester-Milner, working at 17 Wing feels like home. The Junior Ranks Mess and Officers Mess have provided opportunities for both Kailee and Aaron to learn integral skills when it comes to keeping industrial kitchens running.

As one of the few civilian employees in the Junior Ranks kitchen, Kailee Friesen has worked full time as a dishwasher and prep cook for over 10 years. During this time, Kailee has learned to multitask and prioritize duties while working in a fast paced kitchen. Kailee has become an essential part of team and has opened her availability to ensure she is able to work all shifts needed, even ones starting at 0500 hours.

Recently, with monies saved from work, Kailee was able to purchase a home, close to the base, which has increased her independence. Kailee is now able to walk to work within a matter of minutes. Kailee now accesses resources on the base, such as the gym, which have helped strengthen her relationship with her employer and provided Kailee further opportunity to participate in the community at 17 Wing.

As a part of a high school program, Aaron began working at 17 Wing as a work experience student at Junior Ranks as a dishwasher. Because of a family



history with the Canadian military, together with a significant interest in military history, Aaron has been able to mix his personal interests with his career interests in food services. 17 Wing and the Junior Ranks Mess have turned into an extended family for Aaron. After he completed high school, the base had a graduation party for Aaron to celebrate his accomplishments. Many of the people that Aaron works with on a day-to-day basis have also become long standing friends.

Aaron started with a time limited training opportunity at the base to better understand food services in general, and his tasks in particular. This led to competitive employment opportunities in two kitchen positions for Aaron, even though there has been a hiring freeze. Today, it is not uncommon for Aaron to be working full time as he is often the first casual employee phoned for shifts, and Aaron is willing to drop anything to be working.

17 Wing has provided opportunities for Aaron to continue his development as an employee, expand his network and connect with others interested in working with the military. Aaron and 17 Wing have worked together in the past few weeks to have Aaron provide a tour of the facility and provide information and testimonials to others with disabilities on what it means to work for the Canadian military. Aaron's opportunities through 17 Wing have also inspired him to explore furthering his education. He is currently researching different programs where he can obtain his Red Seal; his dream is to work as a cook, and eventually sous chef, at 17 Wing.



Building a Future

Dan White is always full of energy and motivated to do more – he dreams big. Dan has accessed programs at Building Futures Employment Society (FUTURES) since graduating high school in 1990, and we have seen many of the achievements and changes in his life. Dan has been working for a few years now, but his journey to employment has taken a lot of hard work and the end goal – a job – wasn't just about a pay cheque.

Dan started as a general contract worker in the OffShoot Shop, a FUTURES business; he focused on learning work skills and workplace expectations. Soon enough, as is always the case with Dan, he expressed an interest in learning new skills. He tried a few work experiences in the community and started volunteering at a Recreation Centre cleaning exercise machines. This coincided with a change in Dan's health. With a whole lot of hard work, Dan lost excess weight that was affecting his health and he is happy to say that he has kept it off ever since. Years later, Dan was extremely proud to receive the 2010 Male Athlete of the Year from Special Olympics Nova Scotia.

Dan continued to volunteer at the recreation centre for 6 years, but kept trying new challenges. He held positions in 2 FUTURES businesses; the Ladle Restaurant and the Gavel Cafe at a local auction centre. These positions built on the skills he learned as a cleaner, and also taught him new skills that he used in the kitchen. For a number of years Dan worked at all 3 places at once, and loved it.

Dan accumulated a large amount of work experience and skills, and he set his sights on new opportunities. Dan wanted paid employment. He participated in job readiness workshops and found a paid position



as a Cleaner at a local employment centre. In this position Dan started bus training and took the bus with the support of a Job Coach.

The employment centre closed, but that's okay, because Dan found a paid position at Palookas Executive Fitness. Dan has been at Palookas every Tuesday and Thursday for over 5 years now. He does laundry, vacuums the floors, and cleans the exercise machines. He now takes the city bus independently. Dan started the position with the support of a Job Coach, but he's been working independently for a long time now and is happy to have that independence. Dan found more than just paid employment at Palookas; he is part of the team and has made good friends. He is always excited for company events and the annual Christmas party, when he goes to the movies with his co-workers, or is invited to a birthday celebration.

Dan is happy for the money he makes at Palookas, but his job means much more than that. He told us that he loves his job very much and wants to find another job for Monday, Wednesday and Friday. When asked why, he said to meet new friends and to gain more independence. He wants to keep moving on in the world and hopes to have his own apartment one day.

Arron's Summer Employment

Bonnie Cherewyk

Summer employment is an experience most students will have in high school. Through funding received from the Government of Saskatchewan's Ministry of the Economy, the Saskatchewan Association for Community Living (SACL) employs four Employment, Education and Transition (EET) Facilitators to work primarily with students in the transition from high school to the work force; facilitating student work experience, and connecting students to jobs and funding opportunities.

The SACL EET Facilitators administer the Students with Disabilities component of the Student Employment Experience (SEE) program through funding designated by the Ministry of the Economy. This funding provides an opportunity for students, either those returning or those who have just graduated from high school with intellectual disabilities to find summer employment. "Through this funding the SACL administers dollars for training on the job allowances, a job coach, or sometimes a combination of the two," explains SACL EET Facilitator Jeannine Harlton. "This puts our students on a level playing field with students without disabilities who may just be able to walk into a place, hand in a resume and start tomorrow. That is not the reality for some of our students. They may need some extra support or accommodations while on the job."

Through the SEE program, Arron Brogden was able to spend his summer working at the Splish, Splash Auto RV & Pet Wash in North Battleford. "I met Arron 4 years ago at a transition meeting at his high school," says Jeannine. "His teachers at the North Battleford Comprehensive High School are excellent. They ensured that Arron had the opportunity to try out different work experiences to determine what he likes. This is the fourth summer in a row that Arron has used student employment dollars to find a job. He has worked at three different work places for paid work in the last 4 years, all of which came from his previous work experience. The school and his teachers really worked hard to make sure that these work experiences could potentially lead to paid employment, which is exactly what work experience is for."

"I've worked with Gloria Winterhalt, co-owner of Splish Splash for a number of years," says Jeannine. "She has always been a great community minded support person. I admire her ability to integrate charity work and use her business as a training ground for individuals to gain work experience in a real work situation. Gloria is a strong member of her community, both as a business owner and as an advocate."

Splish Splash owners Dave Materi and Gloria Winterhalt opened their business on August 2, 2012 with the determination to build a business model where they are able to give back to their community and support a model of inclusion. Gloria and Dave see the value of hiring individuals with diverse needs, and supporting individuals with intellectual disabilities to be included in the community. "Seeing the smiles on the kids' faces, there is a lot of value in it and for the businesses themselves," says Dave.

"One of the benefits is watching our customers interact with the students. It helps the community really understand that everyone has value in our community and has something to offer in the community. Our customers will buy the kids coke, bring them doughnuts, or talk to them and engage in what they are doing. You couldn't ask for a better payment for them to say yes they are part of our community," says Gloria.

During my interview with Arron a customer walked in and joked with him about working hard. I saw firsthand the relationships Arron has built with regular customers in the short time he has worked at Splish Splash.

I learned from Arron what a typical day looks like working at Splish Splash. Arron squeegees the bays, cleans and polishes the dog wash, mops the floors, directs traffic for customers and helps customers get change.

When I asked Arron if he enjoys working at Splish Splash he says, "Yeah," but even before he answered



me I knew instantly how much he loved working there by the smile on his face.

Kayla, Arron's job coach, supports Arron in developing his skills and meeting Dave and Gloria's work expectations. Kayla explains, "I assist Arron to make sure he is doing what he needs to do to fulfill his job requirements. I am helping him build the skills he needs to perform the job correctly and independently." Through the SEE program Arron had the opportunity to have Kayla as his job coach.

We all need to develop our skills. Job coaches are a great way for individuals to feel supported in gaining necessary employment skills. "Being a job coach is important to me because I want to see Arron succeed," says Kayla.

Jeannine has supported Arron, his family and the school to ensure that Arron is supported and receives work experience that will not only develop

his skills, but is work experience that he enjoys doing. "It has been a real pleasure to be part of Arron's team; seeing his success, seeing how well the school has placed value on his skills and seeing how committed the school is to finding workplaces that are a good fit for him," says Jeannine.

Both Dave and Gloria as employers have also been supported by Jeannine to build an inclusive workplace for individuals with intellectual disabilities. "Jeannine is awesome," says Gloria. "She's been really great in helping us understand the SEE program and the benefits of it. When Dave and I talked about hiring students with disabilities, we wanted it to be a business that actually said yes these kids, these young people, they get paid here. It's not free help. Jeannine has really been able to help support that concept. The students are paid like everyone else."

Splish Splash has a recycling program where they

donate proceeds back to the community. The Functional Integrated Program at the school manages the Splish Splash Recycle Program, therefore half the proceeds are distributed back to the program and the other half is donated to the charities involved with Splish Splash. “For us it has been awesome. We tell customers don’t throw your bottles in the garbage because it goes back to charity, it doesn’t go to us,” says Gloria. “Customers have now started to recycle more.”

Splish Splash also has a charity program through their WashCards®. Gloria explains, “A charity comes in and buys a bundle of 50 WashCards®. Charities are able to buy it for \$10, they sell it to the customers for \$20, and as a business we add an extra \$5 to the card. Therefore the customer is getting the greatest value. They are getting a \$25 wash card for \$20.” Through their inclusive hiring practices, the recycling program and WashCard® fundraiser for charities, Dave and Gloria are promoting inclusion, building community capacity and being a role model employer.

Dave and Gloria’s advice to employers is to have patience and be open to trying more diverse hiring practices. “Think outside the box because

sometimes we get stuck inside of a conception of how we are supposed to work. Not everyone works within that little box,” says Gloria.

Jeannine suggests that the most influential motivator for employers is to see or hear workplace success stories. “I think anytime a business owner can see that, it really gets business owners thinking that they could potentially hire an individual with an intellectual disability. I can tell people why it is a good idea to hire someone with an intellectual disability, but business owners want to hear from other business owners. Hear how it worked and how it was successful. If an employer is reading this and is interested in hiring someone, but they aren’t sure what the individual can do, we would be happy to come in and do a workplace analysis. Through a workplace analysis we can carve out a job for an individual that is meaningful.”

Because of SACL support, the SEE program, Arron’s personal support network and employers like Splish Splash, Arron has been able to build his resume and develop his skills throughout high school. This meaningful work experience will set a trend that will enable Arron to be successful in the workforce after high school.

The epitome of ready, willing and able

We want to introduce you to our son, Brad Strickland from Labrador City, NL. A walking encyclopedia of everything hockey, anything about sharks and our beloved first born. He also has Autism. When he was younger and you asked him what his disability was he would tell you that he was “artistic”, so we go with that.

Brad was fortunate to have an inclusive education and a wonderful resource room teacher who worked with him from Grade 3 to Level 3. He graduated from high school with a modified diploma, but college and university were not an option for him at that time. The days were long for Brad after graduation....he used to just walk around town with no purpose or destinationjust something to do to kill time. Becoming a client of the Employment

Connection Centre in Labrador City helped him open up a new chapter of his life. The corporation had worked with the Iron Ore Company of Canada to establish janitorial positions on a 6-month term for their clients. From 2001 to 2007, Brad had three work terms with IOC. Unfortunately, IOC cancelled the program and with a major upheaval within the Connection Center’s employees, Brad was lost through the cracks. He again just started walking around town...

By 2007, however, he had become a member of the Royal Canadian Legion. He became part of the building maintenance team and was honoured with a certificate of appreciation for his services. Brad also started spending his afternoons hanging around our VERY small mall, hoping to see and talk

to the many friends he had met and worked with at the iron ore mine. Our mall has a grocery store at one end and a Wal-Mart at the other. Encouraged by us, Brad put in his resume with the grocery store first...not once but three times...with no response. Everything with Brad takes time and before you know it years pass. Then we encouraged him to try Wal-Mart...

Now, please let us re-introduce you to Mr. Wal-Mart!!

On Feb.07, 2014 Brad celebrated 3 years of employment with Wal-Mart in Labrador City! He loves his job, which includes retrieving carts from the mall and outside corrals, doing carry outs, janitor duties within the store and helps out with whatever tasks he is asked to do. He is a very valued employee..."I wish we had more employees like Brad", "He is a pleasure to work with", "We can ask Brad to do anything and he will try to help us", You must be so proud of him", "He is so funny in the lunch room", "It brightens my day when I see him", "Brad is such a hard worker...he is our Mr. Wal-Mart!!" These are just a few of the comments I hear about Brad, and I hear them every time I go and shop at the store!!

Brad's future is looking up with some major changes coming his way. Along with his parents, he has purchased a townhouse in Grand Falls, NL, applying for a transfer to the Grand Falls Wal-Mart and making the move from the town he was born and raised in to a new town where his parents are going to retire. Brad is very anxious about this upheaval in his life, but we are lucky to be here to help guide him through this transition. We remind him that he hardly knew anyone when he started working at IOC or Wal-Mart, but now he has made many friends; the same will be true when he starts a new job in a different place.

Brad is an epitome of ready, willing and able!! To quote his younger brother and sister, "it's not what we can all teach Brad, it is what we can all learn from him."

In talking to Brad about writing this story, I asked him what he enjoyed most about working at Wal-Mart. He answered, "I learn something new everyday and I am around good people." Brad's advice to others working for a job....."Don't give up and be patient. It could take time, but just keep applying."



Following her Dreams

Stephanie Boghen

Hello – I am Stephanie Boghen. I am honoured to share my experience with you.

People are always surprised when they find out that I am 36. I take it as a compliment. I was born with Down syndrome but I feel that I have accomplished a lot. Presently I am attending classes at Concordia University in Montreal.

I know many people with disabilities through the many programs I have been in. Some are real characters. But really we are all the same.

I value my family and all my teachers and friends that have supported me.

I never planned to attend university until Mariella called and we met at a Second Cup where I had my usual hot chocolate with whipped cream.

Mariella got my attention when we discussed some of the courses I could be taking. I did feel nervous but decided to go for it.

Marielle's encouragement helped and empowered me. I felt I could succeed.

My first course was 'Theology in Film'. I had to watch and analyze movies in class and at home. I did find it difficult and very challenging. I worked long hours to complete assignments and study for quizzes and exams.

At first I didn't know anyone but I did connect with one student. I slowly started to participate in class and felt I had the professor's support.

For my last assignment I chose to make a video presentation. I learned that I could borrow the equipment I need from Concordia and help to edit and put it all together. I wrote the script about appreciating and protecting nature. I chose the songs: Fragile by Holy Cole; You Light up My Life by Debbie Boone; What a Wonderful World by Louis Armstrong and Fly by Rihanna and Nicki Minaj.

The video was shown in class and my classmates

loved it and I got great feedback. I felt so proud and also accepted by the class.

I really loved my second course 'Current Canadian Theatre'. I have acted in two plays and this is something I plan to get into in the future.

I did have to work hard, beside the lectures, there was a lot of reading and writing. I also worked hard to understand everything to be able to do my assignments. I got pretty good marks like B & B+

My best experience was doing a group presentation. There were six of us and we met a few times to put it together and rehearse. Our presentation was a big success. I received good feedback from my professor and a 3.3 mark. For my final assignment which was very long I got a B.

Mariella has showed me the social and fun side of university life. I have also learned about services that are available to students such as the Access Centre for Help with Time Management and the Essay Clinic.

Realizing that I am capable to complete a university course has given me a lot of confidence and determination to keep going.

I definitely recommend this experience. Everyone should at least have the opportunity to give it a try. With support, help and encouragement, success is possible.

This story is based on remarks given on January 31, 2014 in Montreal at the "Ready, Willing and Able" forum organized jointly with the Canadian Association for Community Living and the Quebec Association for Community Living



Cole at Staples

It's eight o'clock in the morning, a cold and windy Yukon day. Snow whips off the roof of the mall and into our faces as we approach the sliding doors into Staples. They don't move as we approach.

No problem. Cole grips the edge of the door and slides it open, walks into the building. It's a few minutes to opening time, and the store's not open yet. He's right on time—as usual—for work that day.

The staff all greet Cole as he heads to the change room to get ready for the day. Staples is the largest office-supply store in Yukon, with a couple of dozen staff. They all know Cole- he's been a worker here for six years, longer than most of them. He's part of the family.

Cole works in inventory management- stocking shelves as customers come in to buy product. It's a great job for him- predictable, regular, with ebbs and flows that over the years he's become familiar with. We head into the receiving area- a cavernous back room filled to the rafters with boxes and pallets of products.

His first job is ink- restocking the shelves of those expensive boxes of printer fluid. With five or six manufacturers producing hundreds of styles, shapes and varieties of ink, it can be a confusing world of minor differences. A used shopping cart has been filled with the ink packages that have come in overnight—hundreds fill the cart to overflowing. Cole's delighted to see the task- enough work for the first hour or so of the job. He takes the cart and pushes it out to the ink-and-printer section of the store, and begins sorting through the stock, filling holes in the inventory, 'upstocking' extras to use later.

The Staples store goes through a lot of ink- from small inkjet printer boxes to huge laser drums. There's ink for near-obsolete fax machines, for receipt printers, for industrial-capacity operations to the home office. Some are made by the manufacturer, other no-name brands. Each one of those usually comes in five different colours. And each has its own location in the display. Keeping track of them is no easy task.

It's quiet at first in the store- a few early bird office



workers sometimes come in to pick up supplies- but mostly Cole works in peace. As the morning progresses, the occasional customer will come over and ask for assistance. Sometimes Cole can guide them to the proper location- if not, he's got a script he uses to direct the customer for help.

Most are pleasant and supportive of Cole's employment. In the couple of instances where particularly grumpy customers have not, the Staples managers have stood behind Cole giving him the support he needs.

After ink, there's still plenty to do- most importantly, paper. Again, it's a confusing hodgepodge of paper weights, colours, styles, and manufacturers. But after six years, Cole knows his stuff, and it's annoying for him to see an empty spot on the shelves... it's quickly filled. After that, there's coffee, pens and pencils, and whatever other areas of the store need stock replacement.

And Cole does a good job. The district manager singled him out recently, telling him that he had the best-maintained shelves of ink and paper in the region. His direct manager says that, dollar for dollar, Cole is the most valuable employee in the store, taking care of the stock that brings the biggest return to the company every week.

It's high praise indeed. Staples has really opened its heart to people with disability, and our son in particular. He's made to feel welcome, cared for, and part of the employee family. He's welcomed and accommodated, provided a safe and caring working environment. He couldn't ask for a better employer.