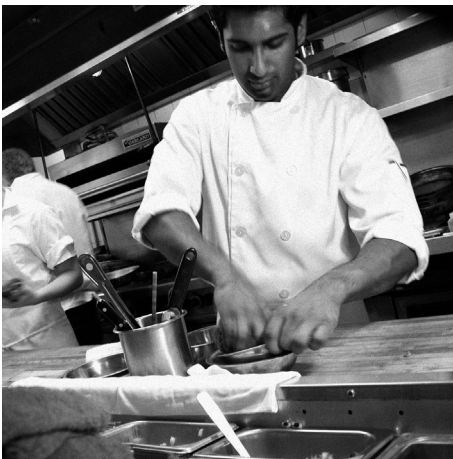


# ready, willing, & able

volume 4, issue 2, 2014



creating an inclusive labour force



The employment rate of persons with intellectual disabilities and autism spectrum disorder (25.5%) is only one-third of the employment rate of people without a disability (75.5%). Simply stated....only one in four are employed. This is not due to an inability or unwillingness to enter the workforce. It is more related to the fact that most employers do not yet view this group of people as potential and viable employees. Other factors include a continued and systemic reliance on sheltered, segregated options rather than participation in the competitive labour force; outdated policy and program factors that create layers of disadvantage and multiple barriers to employment; misperceptions and stereotypes; and inconsistent access to needed employment related supports.

However, this situation is slowly changing. There is now increasing recognition that persons with intellectual disabilities and ASD do have potential to make a significant contribution to Canada's current labour force needs. A recognition that with cooperative and responsive partnerships between and among people with intellectual disabilities

and ASD, employers and community service providers competitive employment is a realistic and attainable goal.

Working aged adults with intellectual disabilities and ASD are ready, willing and able to work. When given the opportunity, and with appropriate support, they are excellent employees. We know that increasing their employment rate would contribute significantly to addressing current and future labour shortages in this country. We know that their employment makes good business sense.

The stories in this booklet illustrate and demonstrate that regardless of label or perceived level of disability, adults with intellectual disabilities and ASD can participate in and contribute to the labour market within this country. These stories 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 the same opportunity.



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The national Ready, Willing and Able (RWA) project is a partnership between the Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL), its provincial / territorial associations and the Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance (CASDA). The three-year project is designed to increase labour force participation of people with intellectual disabilities and ASD, and thereby advance economic productivity and social inclusion in Canada. The RWA project is funded by the Government of Canada and will be active in 20 communities throughout the country.

*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.*

# Kincaid is Inclusive

Approximately 5 years ago, Alex James Gavin moved to Kincaid, a small village in southern Saskatchewan. Not having been to Kincaid before I was excited to meet Alex and learn how the community has supported him to be successful.

When I meet Alex I can't help but smile. Anyone who meets Alex can instantly see how his smile is contagious.

Alex recently graduated high school in 2012. He tells me of the various jobs he did while he was in school. "I was their coke man, the recycling man, and the flower man," says Alex. "I love helping everyone."

In addition to helping people Alex loves bowling, swimming, hiking, family reunions, and watching some hockey games.

Rhonda Pilgrim, a student support teacher with the Kincaid Central School has been a key support in Alex's transition from high school. "My role is to build those bridges from our school to living in the community," explains Rhonda.

Alex received a number of work experience opportunities in school including the postal office and the local grocery store. "The community got to know him," says Rhonda.

"Our vision for Alex when he left this building was that one day he would be working with people because he is a people person," says Rhonda. "Alex's strength is that he is always so happy."

Rhonda invited Marci Down, the Saskatchewan Association for Community Living's (SACL) Employment, Education and Transition Facilitator to be a part of Alex's transition planning. "I supported Alex by accessing employment supports and job coach support," says Marci.

"When SACL got involved it was really like passing a baton from the school to community living - they really built a bridge to community," says Rhonda.

Rhonda and Marci approached Nina Bouffard with

the Kincaid rink to be a mentor and coach for Alex. They believed the rink would be a great opportunity for Alex to work with people and connect even more with the community.

Working at the rink was an opportunity for Alex to obtain more work experience and build his skill set. The rink is 100% volunteer driven, but Nina, with the support of the SACL worked to carve a position and make Alex their first employee.

Marci hosted a workshop with the volunteers at the rink so they would know how to best support Alex. "She did an incredible job," says Rhonda.

With the support of Nina and the Kincaid District Community Service Club board, the community, and the SACL, Alex started working at the rink in the Fall of 2012. His job title was Manager in Training.

When Alex first started working the SACL provided job coach support. Marci worked with Alex's job coaches on their role in helping Alex succeed. "During this process we had some really good discussion and questions came up that you didn't realize would be a concern," says Rhonda. "This was invaluable."

"My role was to guide Alex to his next job and answer any questions he had with what he was being asked," explains Holly Ross, Alex's job coach. "And to tell him how fabulous he was doing in a supportive way."

"Alex was so easy to support because he was so eager to do things properly and thoroughly," says Sharie Gross, Alex's other job coach. "I guided him for the first little while, but very quickly, he was able to check all the things that he thought might need doing on his own."

"My job coaches supported me very well," says Alex. "When I needed help they showed me which jobs needed to be done."

"The community as a whole was so excited to have such great help," says Holly.

"I do the dishes, cardboards, garbage, mopping, sweeping, and I butter a lot of buns," says Alex.

When I ask Alex if he enjoys working at the rink he replies, "I love it."

"When he is at the rink he is tying skates for little kids, he is connecting with adults, he is part of the community," says Rhonda. The general message is that this community has been phenomenal in supporting what Alex has needed."

From previous work experiences, access to job coaches and being given the opportunity Alex now is able to work independently. This is Alex's second year at the rink and he no longer needs job coach support to successfully complete his job.

"Alex has grown the most in his confidence - in his ability to do his job, to work with others and in himself," says Marci. "Alex is very hard working and willing to give everything he has. He has proven how he can be an important employee and work in the community of Kincaid."

"Alex is an exceptional young man," says Nina. "He has taught us quite a bit and he always comes in happy. He is very independent, he loves people and if you give him his list he just gets right at it."

Alex has lots of dreams and goals he wants to accomplish. "I want to stay in the Kincaid area and I would definitely like to go to college," says Alex. "I would like to take a youth program to be a youth leader and help kids with different disabilities - to make them feel happy and to teach them to do fun stuff. I would also like to be a foster parent or a social worker."

Alex also tells me of his Ford Mustang - which he is very proud of owning.

"Alex is just a fantastic young man," says Theresa Weiterman, Alex's foster mom. "We were blessed when he came into our home. We will be very sad if he ever leaves. He is tremendous. Everybody in the community just smiles when he comes around because he just has the smile. The community just accepts him. This is a super community."

I was very touched by Alex's response to what it means to be a part of the community.

"I like helping other people, if someone was stuck in the snow I would help them. I would ask them how their day is and how the weather is," says Alex.

To Alex being a part of the community is about communicating and helping each other.





# A Man of Two Jobs

Hi, my name is Bronson Adams. I am twenty-three years old. I don't read and write very well so my Mom is helping me. I live with my Mom in Alberton, on a dirt road called Sou' West Rd. We live on a big property and my dog, Bones, is my best friend. She is a Black Lab and has very beautiful eyes. Bones and I go for long walks and she likes to swim in the water right below our home. I like to spend time with Bones, my girlfriend Jade, watch TV, play on my play station and drive my tractor lawnmower.

I attended Community Inclusions while I was in grade 12 and again after that for some training courses and they helped me get my first job with Alberton Fisheries. Natalie, from Community Inclusions, came with me for a couple days and then I went by myself. I love working there and I especially like Dean Vincent, my supervisor, he is so funny and makes me feel comfortable. I like the secretaries Sandra and Shelly and all the guys.

My Mom bought me a ride-on tractor lawnmower because I don't have a licence and she used to let me take it to work when we lived in Alberton. All of the fishermen got out of their big fishing boats and came up on the wharf to check out my new wheels! I can't take it to work now because we moved a few kilometers out of town and it is just too dangerous to drive it to work anymore.

I work at the Alberton Fisheries in the Spring (and have been doing that for 4 years now). I also work at Save Easy in Alberton. Darcy Beck and Devon Broome from COPD (Council of People with Disabilities) helped me get on there. I went to training with them and then Skills PEI initially paid my wages. I like working at Save Easy and the



owner Bill Bray is great to me and so are Darren and Chuck and all the other workers. I help carry stuff in, stock shelves and help deliver groceries. I meet lots of people and this helped me get over my shyness and I learned to read those funny codes on packages.

I now work independently at both Alberton Fisheries and Save Easy (I did have a job coach for a while). I earn the same wage as all the other employees. I work at both places on a seasonal basis.

I must admit that I don't like to get up early to go to work but my Mom told me that I could save my money and buy what I wanted so I went to bed earlier at night and it wasn't so bad!

I saved my money from working at the Fisheries and Save Easy and bought a brand new Husqvarna ride on mower. I love it! Now Bones and I go for drives and my Mom bought me a trailer so I help haul the wood and put it in the building and I cut the grass at home and at my grandfather's.

I hope to continue working at Save Easy and the Fisheries. These jobs help me learn new things and I get to meet lots of people.

### *Note from Mom:*

*I would like to express many, many thanks for all of the people involved in helping me to help Bronson get these jobs. Bronson is a remarkable, healthy, kind hearted, handsome young man, who truly LOVES to please people. I can't believe the difference in him since he entered the work force. He is not as shy, has more self-confidence now and has a wonderful, million watt smile! It is so great to live in a caring Community such as Alberton! It certainly is true when it was said that "It takes a whole community to raise a child" and I am so proud to be part of this community!!!*



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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 and autism spectrum disorders 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 and autism spectrum disorders.

For further information on RWA see: [www.readywillingandable.ca](http://www.readywillingandable.ca)

# AACL Celebrates 300th Rotary Employment Partnership Job

When DJ Stankovic walks through the hallways of the City of Edmonton where he works as an Office Assistant, one can immediately tell he's one of the most appreciated employees.

"Hi Deeji!" exclaimed one.

"Hey DJ, how are you today? Lookin' snazzy, did you get a new shirt?" asks another while offering a high five.

Stankovic's new found employment marks the 300th job for AACL's Rotary Employment Partnership. In 5 Alberta Communities, AACL partners with Rotary Clubs and Rotary Districts to develop genuine and meaningful jobs for people with developmental disabilities. In two of those communities AACL is partnering with city governments to create jobs and is hoping to create two more municipal government partnerships in the near future.

Donna Stankovic, DJ's mom, came across the Partnership when she ran into a family friend who works at AACL. They began talking about DJ, and the struggle Donna was having in finding him a job.

"I was trying to do it on my own, and I just couldn't," said Donna. "It seemed like because he had a disability, people didn't want to hire him. You get frustrated."

DJ 'wasn't doing much' before he started working and was really bored, Donna explained. "He was going to the gym a lot. Like every day!"

One of AACL's Rotary Employment

Coordinators met with DJ and helped him develop an employment plan, which included what he wanted in the way of a job. Within a few months, DJ was hired by the City of Edmonton as an Office Assistant. He now works Monday to Friday from 1pm-4pm for a good wage. DJ's has mastered the office equipment he needs to do his job successfully and is thrilled with all the new friends he's made.

"I can tell by his attitude when he gets home every day that he's happy," said Donna. "He's proud. He's proud of getting dressed in the morning and going to work. He has a lot more confidence. It's an important job and he takes pride in it."

DJ's work really helps the office run smoothly, said his supervisor Adrianna Denduyf. He makes sure the offices, waiting areas and kitchen are always tidy and presentable. He photocopies permits, meets and greets customers at the concierge desk





as well being responsible for other special projects.

Not only does he do his job really well, but in addition Denduyf says DJ's personality does amazing things for office morale.

"This is kind of a place where, with serving customers all day long, you sometimes get cranky people," explained Denduyf. "DJ just makes people happy, because he's always so positive. Anytime you ask him how he is, he says, 'I'm awesome!' and that just puts a smile on everyone's face. Everyone appreciates his positive attitude."

To other employers considering hiring someone with developmental disabilities, Denduyf encourages them to just try it. "It changes your work culture," she said. "Everyone has embraced him as part of the team. It's been a really great experience for everyone."

Is DJ saving his hard-earned pay cheques for anything special?

"VEGAS!" he exclaimed. He is in a wedding party, and DJ is happy to be saving for the upcoming stag party being held in Vegas.

## She Makes Everyone Around Her Happy

Theresa Roberts is an on-the-go woman. She not only has two part time jobs, she is also involved with Special Olympics figure skating and bowling, and this year is adding rhythmic gymnastics to the list. In 2013, she played with the provincial Bocce team and, along with a team of 7 others, made it to nationals for a bronze medal. Theresa also shares a home with her husband of 10 years, Julian. It seems like it might be a little overwhelming, but Theresa's motto is "much better to be busy than bored".

She has proven time and again over the last 9 years that she is a valuable employee at Tim Horton's with a reputation amongst her co-workers as being bubbly and friendly. Theresa's manager of 3 years, Roy, said he enjoys having her as a staff member. Theresa has a great attitude and a willingness to learn that makes her a key part of the Tim Horton's team and always works her hardest to complete every chore for the day. Roy sees Theresa as a regular employee who has a lot to offer in the workplace, "Everyone has strengths and weaknesses. Theresa has a lot of great strengths and she works hard."

When asked her favorite thing about working at Tim Horton's, Theresa answers that she likes all her jobs, "Its good work and good people."

While visiting Theresa at work, you can frequently find her at the dish sink with a great big grin, ready to tackle every task. Another great part of the job is getting to chat with customers while clearing and cleaning the dining area. Roy says the customers really enjoy having Theresa there because "She makes everyone around her happy".



# Bob & Walmart – Leading the Way

Walmart is a large employer in our small town and we were excited when we had the opportunity to first work with them in 2011 while we helped Bob reach his goal to become a greeter at Walmart.

Over the last 3 years Bob has enjoyed trying out a variety of positions at Walmart and stills loves the fact that he gets to work in a place that allows him to meet and interact with many people from his community. Having a job has allowed Bob some financial freedom and the ability to spend more freely on things he wants and desires versus just getting by. Bob is an active community person and gives back to his community by volunteering at a local school, singing in the Selkirk Community Choir and playing with Glenaura Pipes and Drums. To see Bob's full story check back in the 2013 edition of RWA.

Part of Bob's success story is something that he is not even aware of. Bob's ability and work ethic opened up the eyes of the staff and management at Walmart to see the capacity of people with disabilities as employees and co-workers. This is an invaluable contribution that Bob has made to our community and his employer.

Walmart has worked with Community Living Selkirk over the last 2 years when in need of staff and even though some of those positions have been short term or the people employed decided on a different work path they are opportunities that wouldn't have occurred if Bob hadn't paved the way.

Walmart reached out to Community Living Selkirk last year when a lady applied for a job and on her resume she had indicated some work experience with Riverside Grill and Community Living Selkirk and gave permission for them to contact us for a reference check. When Walmart HR department contacted us and asked why we were not supporting her in the same way we had supported Bob I explained that



this young lady was choosing to walk the path to employment without any support services as she did not want to be identified as having a disability with her co-workers. I was impressed that the HR person's response was supportive of this choice and then asked that if they hit any hurdles during employment would they be able to connect with us if this young woman agreed. I advised her that we would gladly step in and provide supports if needed and if the lady agreed. This young lady has been working for Walmart for almost a year a now and has not required any supports from us to be successful.

Our experience with Walmart has shown us that once we open employer's eyes to the benefit of hiring people with disabilities and we support the employer through some of their concerns and break the myths of the challenges of working with people with disabilities everyone benefits. The employer has a larger pool of people to hire from, people earn a living allowing them to be less dependent on Government supports and co-workers and the public learn that inclusion is the real answer.

Community Living Selkirk would like to thank Walmart for taking the steps to becoming an inclusive employer and Bob for being an employee that showcased peoples' ability which is far more important than any label attached to them.

# Representing the Store and Our Values

Russell's story is a great example of how a little creativity, networking and listening can lead to the perfect job-fit.

When Hillary from the Community Living Society started working with Russell to help him find a job, the first thing she did was get to know Russell and find out where he wanted to work.

"We basically hit the pavement and went to places where Russell wanted to work," Hillary says. "It was easier than we thought because Starbucks, one of the first employers we approached, was a perfect fit." It was his favourite coffee shop and he went there often, so the staff already knew him.

Russell sweeps inside and outside the store, greets customers, hands out samples, refills the condiments, puts dishes away, fills up milk jugs and stocks cups and lids. He also takes out the garbage and recycling with another staff member.

The manager at Starbucks is proud of Russell's work and wants him to be "up front" representing the company and greeting customers (who like him and often tip). He is an important part of the team and has been welcomed and valued for his contributions. His friendliness and smile brings customers in and greets them when they return.

"He represents the store and our values," says Russell's employer, Cait. "We're proud to have him on staff."

And Russell is proud of his job. After each shift he calls the people important to him in his life and tells them about how well he did that day and how proud of himself he is.

When Russell first started he was shy. It was a new environment with new people and daunting tasks. The Community Living Society provided enough support for Russell to complete his tasks but still feel like he was doing it on his own. He needed help remembering how many jugs of cream to fill and what to do while he's on shift. As he's grown in his relationship with the staff at Starbucks, they've been able to provide some of that support and the support staff has stepped back.

"It's been nice to see Russell step up and do some of those things on his own," says Hillary.

"Where he once needed 100% support, he is now needing 50% support. And of that 50%, 25% is the support staff with CLS and 25% is his co-workers at Starbucks. He's improved so much."

Russell recently got a raise and receives a free pound of coffee per week. For a coffee lover like Russell, this is an important perk.





# Long Term and Dedicated Employee is Ready Willing & Able

Trudy O'Rourke grew up in Mount Pearl, Newfoundland and Labrador. She attended a number of schools in the St John's area. In the 80's receiving equal education was a struggle. Many schools did not even offer classes for persons with disabilities. Trudy was strong and she endured the fight to be integrated into the regular classroom when inclusive education was nonexistent.

There were many barriers and Trudy's transition from school to work took a lot of planning, but she was motivated and wanted to work. At the age of 17, Trudy got her first job through the student summer program as an Assistant Junior Counsellor with the Department of Parks and Recreation in Mount Pearl. For three consecutive summers she worked in this position and went back to school in September with her peers.

Trudy graduated from Gonzaga High school and for the first two years after high school, she was involved with various organizations and volunteered



with the Happy Tree and the Food Bank.

In the winter of 1999, through the supported employment program (Visions Employment Inc.), Trudy secured a job at Coleman's Food Centre in Mount Pearl. She has been working there for 15 years in various store positions. Trudy enjoys stocking shelves and helping out at the cash. Her favorite job is helping with store promotions for the holidays and greeting customers at St. Paddy's Day, July BBQ's and giving out Halloween treats.

Coleman's Food Centre has always been, and remains today, a great employer; and is very supportive of Trudy.

Trudy had the opportunity to be a part of the Supported Employment Newfoundland and Labrador promotions. Her picture is posted on a huge billboard in the St. John's area. She is also involved with the Changing Lives Changing Communities initiative at the Newfoundland and Labrador Association for Community Living, in which she is featured in a video about her work and home life.

Trudy participated in the Adopt a MHA promotion, and invited Minister Steve Kent to her home for tea. This was an opportunity for both parties to get to





know each other and for us to highlight areas where government can lend support to the community. Trudy lives in her own apartment with support, and she enjoys her independence.

As a member of the Newfoundland and Labrador Association for Community Living, Trudy attends meetings and conferences. She is always ready to lend a helping hand, as she is very upbeat and

loves to be involved. Trudy is very proud of her accomplishments and thankful to the people that have and continue to support her through her journey.

## Autism Works

Tyler MacDougall is a high school student who took part in The Autism Works T.R.A.A.C.E program (Transition Readiness and Autism Community Awareness). The program, which assists high school students navigate the employment process, began in April and wrapped-up in August. The program covers career exploration, resume writing, interview skills, communication in the workplace, and finishes with an eight week volunteer placement.

Tyler McDougall was very excited to have his placement at Canadian Tire in Clayton Park. He wanted to work at this particular location for years and had even sent his resume to the store several times. Canadian Tire agreed to be an employer of our T.R.A.A.C.E program, and Tyler couldn't have been more excited! His co-workers and management team were very impressed with his work ethic and ability to get along with both the team and the customers. Some of his duties included working in the warehouse sorting and carrying items, cleaning the sales floor, and re-stocking shelves. He also learned how to use the store's computer system.



While the T.R.A.A.C.E program has ended, Tyler's time at Canadian Tire Clayton Park continues. He was hired as a part-time employee! His mother said he eagerly gets up at 6:00 a.m. to get ready and walk to work for his 7:00 a.m. shift. Tyler now works without a job coach and is very much respected by his co-workers. We will continue to keep in touch with him and his managers!

# Le Jarry Deuxième cafe bistro

Good food, nice atmosphere, large windows... the cafe Jarry Deuxième is a welcoming place; but it is mainly through its staff that it stands out from other restaurants. Indeed, assistant cooks, dishwashers and servers are all young men and women with developmental disabilities who are doing an internship in cooking or in customer service.

Located in Montreal and opened in April 2013, the cafe is an initiative of Parrainage Civique Les Marroniers (Citizen Advocacy, Les Marroniers), an organization promoting independence and social integration for people with developmental disabilities. As a sponsor of numerous projects for citizen participation, the organization is proud to contribute to the social vitality of its neighbourhood by keeping its local roots and achieving regional

influence.

With its new social economy project, Jarry Deuxième bistro cafe, Parrainage Civique Les Marroniers offers a solid internship experience, under the supervision of a dedicated team of professionals, to young adults with developmental disabilities. Since its opening, 28 young men and women, with an average age of 23 years, have completed a training period of 6 months to 1 year. Slightly more than half of them come from special schools and are at Jarry Deuxième as part of their academic curriculum. For the other half, they come from public or community organizations, or come by themselves. All participants who completed their training said they had increased their independence, sense of initiative, ability to take responsibility, the organization of their work,



their sense of being socially useful and of having their place in society.

"Before my training here, I didn't think I would be able to find work. I was very shy. Now, I have learned to follow recipes, how to prepare the food that is served, and I realized that we are able to accomplish this. I have more confidence in myself than before." Bertrand Malette, kitchen worker.

In one year, the project has already been recognized on the one hand for its social impact by receiving the Solidaire Empowerment award by Centraide (United Way) and secondly for its entrepreneurial qualities by the Concours québécois en entrepreneuriat (Québec Entrepreneurship Contest), as best regional social economy enterprise.

When a customer comes to Jarry Deuxième, he enters a friendly and modern restaurant where social diversity is desired, or even created, to facilitate the encounter with one another. In this normalizing and accessible place, it is possible and enjoyable to live out and celebrate our differences.

If the cafe is fast becoming a meeting place for community organizations and for neighborhood regulars, it also aims to reach the more gourmet customers. Many times in the course of the year, they organize a five-course dinner in partnership with a chef of a restaurant or a catering business from Montreal. This option offered by Jarry Deuxième aims to delight the taste buds of fine diners, certainly, but unofficially, it also aims to open their minds to acceptance of difference and diversity.

After a year of operations, the Jarry Deuxième wants to go further in the training given to young people living with developmental disabilities, and to continue the demystification of such limitations with new clients. A catering service was thus added to the business activities of Jarry Deuxième, acting as an extension to the cafe. In addition to preparing customers orders, trainees join the clients and work in their chosen meeting place, and in this way reach a whole new clientele. During each event, a real step in taken towards erasing prejudices and building a more inclusive society!

## Attention to Detail Pays Off

Customers who rent vehicles from Discount Car and Truck Rentals in Fredericton can be certain that their rentals will be spotlessly clean. It takes a person with a talent for paying attention to detail to ensure that the vehicles are road-worthy. Steve Laurie is just that person.

When I arrived at Discount to do the interview for this article, we were warmly greeted by Steve, a polite and engaging young man. He was hard at work cleaning the rental vehicles that had been returned to the rental garage. The sun was reflecting off the cars that had been cleaned, buffed and shined to perfection. Music was playing in the background and fresh air was flowing through the sun lit space. Steve, who cleans many cars a day, continued his work as he shared his story about how he came to work for the car rental business.

Even as a high school student, Steve was highly motivated to find a job. In grade 10, he was introduced to Jon Lister, Transition to Work Facilitator with the New Brunswick Association for Community Living.

"Through getting to know Steve, it was easy to tell he wanted to work and was willing to do what it took to get him to where he wanted to be," says Jon.

Through the Transition to Work program, high school students learn skills necessary to find work. Transition Facilitators get to know each student and learn what their interests are, what their strengths are and what types of supports might be needed to ensure that they are successful after high school. Steve jumped in with both feet and learned skills



such as how to prepare a resume, how to handle job interviews and about workplace conduct. Job shadowing was also an important aspect of the program, as it gave him exposure to real work experience and a work environment.

Through the Transition to Work program, Steve found a job as a dishwasher for a popular, high-end restaurant. “I liked working there, but it didn’t work out, because it was too fast of a pace,” Steve says.

“It just wasn’t the right fit for me.”

With the support of an employment agency, Jobs Unlimited, he found a job opportunity at Discount Car and Truck Rentals. He worked with a job coach to learn the job and then after only two weeks he was able to work independently. He also continued to receive support from the staff at Discount.

Steve was originally hired as part time staff to clean cars, but because of his strong work ethic and his ability to master his job tasks, he was hired full time. His employer even added new responsibilities to his position. In addition to cleaning the rentals, Steve now picks up and drops off customers.

When asked what he valued most about working,

Steve says being independent is important to him.

“My older brother and sister live on their own and I’m learning what it’s like to be on my own too. I want to pay my own bills and have my own things, but I also like saving the money that I make.”

Jon Lister says Steve had all of the right supports, a supportive family, supportive employment agency and the supportive employer, but the key factor was Steve’s motivation to be successful.

“He did all the hard work and it paid off, not only for him, but for his employer,” says Lister.

Steve has graduated from high school and is now an adult. He no longer requires supports from Jobs Unlimited, and continues to receive occasional support from the staff at Discount.

Steve offers the following advice to others who are looking for work after high school, “You have to learn about how to apply for a job, how to do the job and you have to find the right fit.”





# Exceptional Customer Service

It would be hard to imagine someone that loves his job more than Corey Hiltz. I might sound like I am exaggerating, but I am not. When I asked Corey about working at Pete's Frootique, his immediate response was "when I walk into Pete's, all I feel is happiness". Corey is the perfect example of how important working is, for all the benefits it provides. But let me start when I first met Corey.

In 2010 Corey applied to the Community Works Project, a temporarily funded project through Building Futures in Lower Sackville. He was a year out of high school and wanted a job. The problem: he had difficulty finding work and wasn't entirely sure what he wanted to do or could do. He participated in a month of pre-employment workshops; we covered various topics from job searching to employer expectations. Then we focused on understanding his skills and getting Corey some work experience.

Corey is positive, polite and very easy to work with; but he didn't know where his skills lay and needed a boost of confidence. We arranged a subsidized placement at a local retailer and then I really started to see a change in Corey. Throughout the 6 month work experience Corey's self-confidence grew with every new task he learned and every new relationship he created. By the end of the 6 months I knew Corey would find work, no problem! A week after the work experience ended Corey had an interview at Pete's Frootique and he was hired in the meat department.

Working at Pete's Frootique has an important and meaningful experience for Corey. Not to say that life was easy the moment he was hired. Corey has worked hard and learned some things along the way. Remember how I said that Corey didn't know where his skills lay? Well now Corey can say with absolute confidence that customer service is his strength. In fact, the Director of Human Resources even wrote a letter to Corey's supervisors stating that Corey provided her with a "HOME RUN in exceptional service". Not only that, Corey also recognizes that multi-tasking is difficult for him and he is finding



ways to deal with this. Now Corey works as a Case Clerk in the Deli department and his primary duty is providing customer service. He is working morning shifts, when multi-tasking is less of a concern, and he is "doing one thing at a time". Corey understands, better than a lot of people, that no workplace is perfect but you just move past it and focus on your job.

Work has meant a lot of things to Corey - money, self-confidence, friends, learning, being a team player, self-awareness, hard work, finding his place in the world. All of these are part of Corey's experience. Pete's Frootique is a place where he has learned new things, met friends and co-workers that are like family, he is part of a supportive team and Corey can now teach new staff the same way people taught him.

As Corey said, working "means the world to me, it's amazing, it is the one thing I've always wanted".

# An Ideal Employee

When the opportunity to work at Costco within their merchandising department came along, Viola knew this was something she wanted to do. Viola loved the idea of a busy retail environment and always having something to do.

Viola started at Costco during the busy holiday season. Her main duty is to ensure the clothing department is kept neat and tidy and, as Viola will tell you; this is a never ending task. Since her start in December 2013, Viola has increased her knowledge of the products within the clothing department, works hard to make sure what people need is on the shelves and available to them by replenishing merchandise and providing helpful customer service.

Viola is always eager to help members and has taken the initiative to learn the store layout and products to ensure she can offer assistance to the many members she meets each shift. Viola's supervisors

report that she is always positive, friendly and open to helping out in many different ways – whether it be scheduling changes or new tasks, Viola is willing to be flexible and accommodating, the ideal Costco employee.

One of the most exciting opportunities for Viola is that she is now learning other roles including the software programs used at Costco and looking forward to advancement. While Viola admits to struggling with new technology, she appreciates the opportunity to learn all about it and fine tune her skills.

When asked what she likes most about her job, Viola shared that she loves serving the Costco members and working with a great team of co-workers. “I’m always happy to go to work and I look forward to going,” Viola says. Viola feels that she is a valued member of the Costco team and she leaves every shift feeling like she has accomplished something.

As for what is next for Viola? She hopes to continue working at Costco. It’s always a journey. There is always something new to learn or someone new to help out.





# Opening the Doors to Success

Jaroslaw was eager for an opportunity to work for a company that offered not only great wages and benefits but also an opportunity for growth. Jaroslaw found this at Costco in Mississauga. He has always said he wanted to be a part of something big.

When Costco was accepting resumes, Jaroslaw jumped at the chance to be involved with a company that not only values its employees, but makes them feel like they are part of a family. Costco offered Jaroslaw a position and told him that there is always opportunity to grow within the company. Jaroslaw began working as a Front Lot Associate in October 2013. Retail at Christmas time is no easy feat. But he embraced the role and task ahead and fit in immediately. Jaroslaw's positive attitude was infectious. He has a real way of making the Costco member feel welcomed and valued. Placing him at the front of the store was a perfect choice.

On a regular day, Costco is very busy. The volume of customers can be overwhelming, however, Jaroslaw has proven that he can meet the demands of a fast paced environment and strive for excellence. He feels that "the experience overall has been great. I've been treated well and all my coworkers are easy to work with. Costco has given me the independence that I had been longing for within a job".

Jaroslaw loves his work. Although he admits that working outside some days in the winter can have its



ups and downs, but overall "it is pleasant". Being a part of the Costco family has provided Jaroslaw with a new sense of individuality and has opened the doors to many opportunities. At this time the future looks bright and his career is promising.



