

What are students looking for in the workplace?

by Heidi Riley



In December, students, educators and employers came together at a forum to discuss what students value in their work experiences. It was also an opportunity for representatives from the Holland College Tourism and Culinary Centre, the UPEI co-op program, and Charlottetown Rural High School to talk about the work placement experiences they offer their students. The forum was organized by the Tourism Sector Council and the Tourism Industry Association of PEI.

Susan Shaw is the Internship Coordinator with the Tourism and Culinary Centre. Susan and the student speakers talked about some of the factors that are important as they research and choose employers.

Students appreciate:

- workplaces that have a good reputation that will be recognized by future employers.
- employers who offer a training plan which clearly spells out what the student is expected to do.
- a challenging and fulfilling job with continuous learning opportunities.
- rotating to different jobs within the company to gain a better understanding of the business.
- opportunities for career advancement and growth.
- opportunities for travel and career mobility in other provinces or abroad.
- employers who are engaged with their staff and show a passion for their work.
- flexible scheduling that allows the employee to set their own hours of work.
- support and feedback from the employer.
- working enough hours and receiving pay above minimum wage.

Suggestions for encouraging more graduates to stay on PEI

Matthew Snyder is a second-year student in the **Hotel and Restaurant Management** program at the Tourism and Culinary Institute. He chose to do his on-the-job training at the **Great George**. He went on to work there full-time during the summer and is now working there part-time during the school year. "I chose this property because I was impressed by the look of it and it has a great atmosphere. I am excited to go to work every day. It is a sociable yet professional environment.



Matthew Snyder

"I look for an employer who is focused on the employees and make them feel valued. I also look for a flexible schedule that fits into my school day. Good wages are also important. I recommend that employers become more involved in the school so that they know what we have been taught and they can give us an opportunity to use our training."

Matthew says a good way to research an accommodations business is to check it out on www.tripadvisor.com "If the guests give it good reviews, it is probably a great place to work."

Ernie Doiron, coordinator of the **UPEI Business Co-op program**, listed a few things his students look for in co-op work terms:

- meaningful work relevant to the students' business abilities
- mentorships and feedback from supervisor
- recognized and respected as a valued member of the work team
- an accurate job description and/or work plan which clearly outlines student/ employer expectations.
- good pay is an expectation - but remember this work term is a step forward
- rewards program and other benefits
- opportunity to work off-site occasionally

"The student's attitude, work ethic and commitment to their employer will play a key role in the success of their work term," says Ernie. "Demonstrate initiative and be proactive! Make a positive impression and maximize the opportunities to excel in your work."

For more information, about **Tourism & Culinary Centre**, call **894-6830** or visit www.hollandcollege.com



For more information about the UPEI co-op program, call **628-4397** or visit www.upei.ca and search **co-op**.

Program helps students plan for the future

by Stella Shepard



Tristan and his mother Lana Chatman participated in the **Take Our Kids to Work** program. The program allows students to explore job choices and learn about the skills and educational levels needed.

Take Our Kids to Work is a national program. Grade 9 students across Canada are hosted by parents, relatives and volunteers at workplaces across the country. The program supports career development by helping students connect what they are learning at school to the world of work.

"Beginning in September, grade 9 students prepared for the day by exploring career choices," says **Linda Thistle-McKenna**, School Counsellor at **Montague Intermediate School**. "Students also learned about health and safety issues and workplace etiquette."

Work placements

In November, the grade 9 students from Montague explored a number of workplaces. They visited a **building supplies company, beauty salon, vet clinic, school, manor, bakery, construction site, excavating company, mussel farm, potato warehouse, daycare centre, kindergarten, wild life services, entertainment facility, and a truck driving company.**

High school courses

"In March, students will pick their grade 10 courses and they need to have some direction," says Linda.

"They need as much support and career education as possible. Take Our Kids to Work is one activity we use to educate students about the options that are available to them and about the planning needed to reach their goals."

Student learning experience

Tristan Chatman 13, accompanied his mom **Lana Chatman** to her workplace at **Kent Building Supplies** in Montague. Lana has been employed with the company for three years in flooring sales.

"It was an enjoyable experience having Tristan at work," says Lana. "He contributed by labeling products and interacting with other staff and customers. He also keyed product numbers into a computerized data base. It gave him a sense of accomplishment.

"The workplace experience gave Tristan a sneak peek at the skills needed in the retail sector. He better understands the importance of providing good customer service.

"He has also come away with a better understanding of my job and the challenges of balancing work and home life."

"It was a positive experience," says Tristan. "But I know a career in retail is not for me. I've known since grade 6 that I want to be a video game designer. I plan to pick high school courses that will better prepare me for my career choice.

"I have a deeper appreciation for my mom after spending the workday with her. Now I know why she wants to rest when she comes home from work."

Take Our Kids to Work is sponsored by the Learning Partnership, a national non-profit organization.

For more information, visit www.thelearningpartnership.ca and click on Programs.

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