

Program lets high school students test drive a career

by Heidi Riley

EXPLORING CAREERS

Test Drive is a career exploration program offered only at **Charlottetown Rural High School** this year. “Students get the chance to talk to people in careers they are interested in to see what it is like to work in that career,” says **Kent Avery**, Cooperative Education Coordinator.

Test Drive began as a pilot program last September. “I saw the need for more career exploration opportunities for students,” says Kent. “I was inspired by the **Test**

Drive Aerospace program offered in three western high schools. We also borrowed ideas from a similar program underway in Newfoundland.”

Kent and **Elaine MacRae**, Career Futures and Hospitality and Tourism teacher at Charlottetown Rural, organized the program. “This program is open to all students at the school,” says Kent.

“We meet with each student to find out what they are interested in. Not every student who applies will be

accepted. But if we can determine that the experience will help them to make a decision about a career, we will try to arrange the experience they are after.

“High school students face tough decisions about their future post-secondary education. We want them to be aware of the opportunities in their area of interest and make informed decisions to help prepare them for their future. We hope to offer Charlottetown Rural students a chance to participate in the program again in the spring semester.”

☎ For more information about the **Test Drive** program, contact **Kent Avery** at 368-6908.

☎ For more information about the **Test Drive Aerospace** program, contact **Willard Horne**, Aerospace Human Resource Sector Council, at 892-3178 or visit www.ahrsc.ca

Marc Richard, grade 11 student at Charlottetown Rural, has always had an interest in nature. He is taking the Conservation elective in high school, and took the Test Drive program to learn more about a career in Forestry or Conservation. Marc spent a half day with **Holland College Wildlife Conservation Technology** students at the provincial forestry department’s tree nursery. In the spring, he will spend more time with forestry staff.

“I’ve done some research, and I know there are conservation and forestry jobs at the National Parks,” says Marc. “The experience has made me more aware of this as a career. The Test Drive program is a good opportunity for students who don’t know what jobs are available after high school.

“This experience was a lot of fun. It was great to talk to post-secondary students who are interested in the same thing I am. My high school conservation elective gave me a good heads up on what to expect. I have learned how to find out the age of trees by drilling a core sample and counting the rings to see if a forest is ready to harvest or is good for wildlife habitat.”

Marc is already working on finding a summer job in forestry or conservation. “It’s a good feeling to have solid ideas for my future,” says Marc.



Marc Richard

☎ For more information about forestry and conservation occupations on PEI, visit www.pei.jobfutures.org and search **Forestry** and **Conservation**



Vanessa Dennis

Vanessa Dennis is a grade 11 student who is interested in becoming a physician. To get a taste of what it is like working in a hospital, she volunteered at the QEH. The Test Drive program helped her find out more about the field. “This program is a great way to find out what direction to go with your life,” says Vanessa. “A lot of people go to university without a clear idea of what job they want to do. Test Drive gives us some real-life experience in the field we are interested in.”

The program arranged for Vanessa to speak to PEI’s **Physician Recruitment Coordinator, Sheila MacLean**. “We sat down and talked about the process of getting into medical school, how much work was involved, how to prepare for entrance exams, and what undergrad programs would be a good idea. She also got me in touch with another person who sent me a list of universities offering medical programs.

“I was thinking about a career in nursing, but I’m not sure it would be totally satisfying. But an undergraduate degree in nursing would make a great stepping stone to medical school. I feel that taking a nursing degree would be more interesting and more hands-on than taking a straight science degree.”

“The Physician Recruiter was very helpful,” says Kent. “She agreed that we need to encourage more young women to pursue careers in the medical field.”

☎ For more information about PEI Physician Recruitment, contact **Sheila MacLean** at 368-6302 or e-mail smmaclean@gov.pe.ca