

Bringing farmers and workers together

by Stella Shepard

Agriculture Resources

PEI Agriculture Sector Council agriculture employment officers match farmers with workers. Officers based in each county assist job seekers to find full-time, part-time or seasonal employment in agriculture. They help employers recruit skilled workers and provide access to a job seeker database. They also provide information to both employees and employers on where to obtain training in agriculture.



Paul Beamish secured agricultural employment with assistance from the PEI Agriculture Sector Council's employment officers. "Some day, I hope to have my own farming operation," he says.

Securing employment

Paul Beamish of Warren Grove learned about the agriculture employment officers through word-of-mouth. He recently contacted an agricultural employment officer while searching for farm-related work.

Growing up on an apple farm, Paul was introduced to agriculture at an early age, which instilled a passion for farming. "I helped with the work involved with the farm," says Paul. "I enjoy being outdoors working with nature. I also have experience working on a mink farm and doing various jobs on small-scale farming operations."

An agricultural employment officer met with Paul to discuss his farming interests, his agricultural experience and how far he was willing to travel to work. He gave Paul contact information of potential

employers. Paul made the connection and was hired to work at a potato farm in his community.

"Since I don't have access to transportation, it was important that I find work close to home," he says. "The farming operation I work for is within biking distance from where I live.

"It's seasonal employment during the summer months but that could change. During the fall potato harvest, I could be working longer hours than I do now. I will stay working as long as my employer needs me."

Employment needs

"Our employment officers in all Island areas are busy matching farmers and workers together," says **Kevin McGee**, agriculture employment co-ordinator.

"The importance of farmers having experienced staff is essential," says Kevin. "Prior experience is not necessary for short-term positions such as harvesting and planting. But it would be greatly beneficial to find experienced workers because it would reduce the amount of supervision needed. As well, it could lead to more productivity and higher product quality.

"Also, short-term positions with the right person could turn into full-time employment."

Growth of the service

"In the five-year history of our agriculture employment services project, we have experienced amazing growth," says Kevin. "We have developed a database of workers. We are a total recruitment service working with farmers to understand their individual requirements.

- The service is free to both the employees and employers."
- Agriculture employment officers will be available until mid December.



For more information, contact:

Andrea Pickett (western office) at 436-1826 or e-mail agrijobswest@eastlink.ca

Christina MacLeod (central office) at 892-2591 or e-mail agrijobseast@eastlink.ca

Christina MacLeod (eastern office) at 838-1900 or e-mail at agrijobs@eastlink.ca

Kevin McGee, Agriculture Employment Co-ordinator at 892-2591

or toll free at 1-866-892-1091.

To check out agricultural employment opportunities, visit www.peiagsc.ca and click on **Employment Opportunities**

The PEI Agriculture Sector Council is funded by the Canada/Prince Edward Island Labour Market Development Agreement (www.lmda.pe.ca)

Clubhouse provides a safe place for people with mental illness

by Patricia Roy

Mental Health Support

Notre Dame Place in Summerside provides programs and a safe place for people in East Prince living with mental illness. "We have over 100 members," says Director **Pat Winchester**. "About 25 members use the program every day."

Notre Dame Place opened in 1993 and is operated by the not-for-profit organization **Canadian Mental Health Association/PEI Division**. "Programs were in place before that time, but they were not connected and were offered at different locations," says Pat. "After considerable research and discussions on effective models, Canadian Mental Health Association decided to establish this centre.

"We now offer an internationally accredited program called **The Clubhouse**, where individuals with a diagnosed mental illness can become members," she says. "Members work side by side with the staff to look after Notre Dame Place. Membership is voluntary for as long as members need it."

The staff

Six people are employed at Notre Dame Place Clubhouse. Employees have a background in Human Services or have a Bachelor of Arts degree in Human Sciences. Two additional staff look after housing. Notre Dame Place manages 20 apartment units which are located in the main building, the new supported housing complex, and in the community.

Employment opportunities for members

Jo-Anne Praught is one of two Employment Counsellors at NDP. She says members of the Clubhouse are encouraged to develop their strengths and talents. "The Clubhouse is based on a work-ordered day in which members choose their level of involvement in



From left: Employment Counsellor Jo-Anne Praught, Clubhouse Member Michelle Hogg and Program Director Pat Winchester take a few minutes for a photo at Notre Dame Place in Summerside.

different areas. Some members choose clerical work, while others may work in the canteen, maintenance, preparing meals or in housekeeping. Many members are studying to increase their education levels, pursuing employment, or working full or part-time jobs."

Some members need to take small steps to work in the community. "Staff and members recruit businesses in the community to be part of the **Transitional Employment** program," says Jo-Anne.

"These job opportunities benefit employers as well as members. The employer trains the counsellors, who then train the members."

Jo-Anne explains that this method eliminates the interview process, which can be very stressful for anyone. "The transitional positions run six to nine months. It's a win-win situation for employers because if the member can not work on a particular day, the placement manager can cover for them."

Workshops

Employment Skills Development sessions are offered to members one-on-one or in a group. "We have résumé building sessions and concentrate on whatever the members' needs are," says Jo-Anne. "We are trained career coaches, with the same type of training as other career counsellors on the Island."

Michelle Hogg has been a member of the Clubhouse for about five years. "It took a lot of steps before I could go out and work in the community," says Michelle. "The staff has been great in finding work that suits me. I have had great support."

The Transitional Employment program is funded by the Canada/Prince Edward Island Labour Market Development Agreement (www.lmda.pe.ca)



For more information, call **Pat Winchester** at 888-2237.

Visit www.cmha.pe.ca or the **International Centre for Clubhouse Development** site at www.iccd.org

www.employmentjourney.com