



YOUTH EMPLOYMENT SECTOR



Career Connection – Youth Force in the Toronto Sun recently published an excellent series profiling young people who have been helped by the youth employment centres in Toronto. The series is provided @ <http://www.canoe.ca/CareerConnectionNews/03archives.html> and reprinted below.



O.A.Y.E.C. - HIRING MADE EASY

Youth Get a Boost in the Workplace

By Nick Candiotta

The Toronto Sun – September 10, 2003

Since 1988, the Ontario Association of Youth Employment Centres (OAYEC) has focused on helping young people reach both employment and life goals.

Through a network of more than 70 youth employment centres across the province that deliver accessible, high-quality, outcome-based employment services, OAYEC builds futures.

"We need to invest in the youth of today in order to ensure a prosperous tomorrow," says Linda McGrath

"There's a wonderful potential workforce that's not being utilized right now and we have to find a way to change that," says Linda McGrath, project co-ordinator of OAYEC's youth employment job development project. OAYEC's support of the centres is multi-faceted -- the most obvious being the creation of public awareness about employment issues facing the youth of Ontario.

Linda McGrath of the Ontario Association of Youth Employment Centres.

It is their hope that this awareness will lead business to seek out the services of the employment centres -- and to hire the youth who use them.

"There are so many programs available, from on-the-job training through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU), wage subsidies for qualified youth through HRDC programs to subsidies for employers to train apprentices. Our job is to make employers aware of these services and programs."

In addition, OAYEC conducts research on youth employment issues and offers wide distribution of the results. The employment centres embody OAYEC's commitment to remaining at the forefront of knowledge and practice related to youth employment.

Managers and staff are provided with professional development opportunities aimed at enhancing youth employment services.

"The double cohort is a perfect example. While everybody was focused on the two classes heading into universities and colleges, we concentrated on the two years of people trying to get into the workforce. Nobody has focused on them very much or on the continued effects of the double cohort," McGrath says.

Funded through a combination of federal, provincial and municipal programs, youth employment centres offer job placement services to industry at no cost to the employer.

The centres aim to place young people between ages 15 and 29 into the right job to capitalize on their energy and abilities.

In addition, the success of the centres relies on the active participation of employers at both the local and provincial level -- more than 5,000 companies used the centres' services in 2002 in Toronto alone.

"Between all our agencies, there are thousands of youths available. We need business to invest time, not money. They have to give the youth a chance; they are all taking a risk, but they need to look at the big picture -- it's a necessary risk," McGrath says.

The fact that the country will soon be facing a shortage of skilled tradespeople as baby-boomers begin to retire is not lost on the centres.

With extensive experience working in youth employment, they have a history of successfully matching abilities with an employer's needs. Through these successful matches, the centres hope to ensure today's youth become vital members of tomorrow's workforce.

"Youth employment continues to be very high ... double the national unemployment rate (hovering around 15%) ... it's very high. The real message is that we need to invest in the youth of today in order to ensure a prosperous tomorrow. And it has to be in all youth, not just certain groups."

Over the next 12 weeks, Career Connection will profile young people who have been helped by the youth employment centres in the Toronto area.

For more information about the program itself, or to find the centre in your area, contact OAYEC at 416-323-9557 or visit them on the Web at www.oayec.org.

A Safe Place to Succeed

By Nick Candiotta

Toronto Sun – September 17, 2003

In 2001, Javier Ortiz fled Columbia to escape homophobia. The 18-year old was in search of a better life in Toronto, but was having trouble finding it. "I wasn't able to speak English, so it was hard to talk about my issues because I couldn't express myself," Ortiz says.

After seeing their flyer on the 519 Community Centre Web site, Javier visited a Supporting Our Youth (SOY) safe space.

"When Javier first arrived, he was extremely lost and was struggling to find his place in Canada," says Clare Nobbs, program director.

Javier's initial SOY meetings were very different from other group experiences in his new home. "It was the perfect environment. I felt very comfortable ... I saw I could be in a safe place where nobody judged me."

Javier began to volunteer at SOY in May 2002, handling a variety of duties including peer support and fundraising. "Javier was here every day, working for free," Nobbs says. "We wanted him on staff, but we didn't have the funds to hire him."

Nobbs approached the Gateway Cafe -- an agency that provides employment services for youth -- about a solution.

"We immediately recommended Skills Link, a wage subsidy program offered through Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC)," says Diana Gatti, divisional co-ordinator.

Through Skills Link, SOY receives a wage subsidy in exchange for providing on-the-job training to Ortiz. As per HRDC regulations, Javier had to qualify for the subsidy, and on Aug. 25, his employment came through.

"The program allows Javier to improve his English, network in the community and also gives him an opportunity to earn a living," Gatti says.

Javier recently celebrated his first anniversary with SOY and continues to work on a variety of projects -- most notably the second edition of the newcomer immigrant youth project, Express II.

"If I had to give any advice, it would be have the courage to go out and look for your chance."

For more information about SOY and Gateway Cafe, visit them at www.soytoronto.org and www.gateway-cafe.com.

To identify your neighbourhood youth employment centre for hiring made easy, at not cost to you, visit www.oayec.org/yejd_locations.html.

Connecting to Opportunity

By Nick Candiotta

Toronto Sun – September 24, 2003

Mike Cabral wanted to find a job. When he wasn't having much luck, he turned to St. Stephen -- well, sort of.

The 25-year-old approached St. Stephen's Community House, and enlisted the services of its Employment Training Centre (ETC).

"I have real problems reading and writing," Cabral says. "And nobody wanted to take a chance with me."

"As a result of his extreme literacy issues, he was unemployed for over two years before coming to us," says Giselle Perri, St. Stephen's Job Development Placement Service (JDPS) co-ordinator.

Mike qualified for a government-funded program that helps unemployed youths in their search for a job. As part of the Job Connect program, Mike was assigned an employment counsellor.

"He was going out with her to interviews, following in his car because he couldn't read the street signs," Perri says. "This went on for five or six months."

After a placement as a maintenance person at the Canadian National Exhibition, Mike's dream match came into view -- working with cars at Apollo Volvo Specialists.

"We were looking to give somebody an opportunity and didn't have the money for an apprenticeship, so St. Stephen's was the answer," Apollo's Sylvie Rodrigues says.

The repair shop qualified for a wage subsidy in exchange for training Mike -- and his work trial began.

"I was here for two weeks as a tryout," Cabral says. "It was up to the shop if they wanted me to stay."

"It was never in doubt. Mike has been absolutely fantastic ... he's great with his hands. We've had a lot of compliments from clients that our shop is so clean," Rodrigues says.

As Mike enters his third week of employment at Apollo, he still remembers his long job search.

"At St. Stephen's, they really focus on helping you ... they don't give up."

Either did Mike Cabral.

For more information about St. Stephen's Community House, visit the Web site at www.ststephenshouse.com.

To identify your neighbourhood youth employment centre for hiring made easy, at no cost to you, visit www.oayec.org/yejd_locations.html.

Say YES to Job Search

By Nick Candiotta

Toronto Sun – October 1, 2003

Unable to stay in one job for long, Tavis Ross finally said YES to help. Arriving at the Youth Employment Services (YES) office at 555 Richmond St. W., the 23-year-old was merely looking for a new start.

"I just wasn't in anything I could make a career out of," Ross says. "So I went to YES to start something more permanent."

"When he came to us, he was on the verge of being on the streets," says Braum Fader, job developer for YES.

Because of his age and employment status, Ross qualified for YES' Job Connect program and became part of the Job Development Placement Service (JDPS). For Fader, one of his first duties as a job developer was to find out what type of career Ross wanted.

"He let me know very early that he enjoyed working with his hands and was willing to work his way up," Fader said.

In February, Ross started a placement at Harley-Davidson of Toronto.

"I was interested in mechanics because I had some experience," Ross says. "But the thought of working with Harleys never crossed my mind ... the idea seemed too good to be true."

As it turned out, Ross was the one who seemed too good to be true for Harley-Davidson.

"From the start, he has been outstanding, a very good employee," says service manager Marc Frantz. "I would say he definitely has a knack for the work and applies himself successfully to whatever task he is assigned."

In fact, Tavis was so successful that Harley-Davidson ended his placement early so they could enter him in their apprenticeship program.

As part of his training, he will have to complete 3,500 hours of labour time with a certified mechanic, in addition to finishing his Harley-Davidson classroom education.

Find out more about Canada's first youth employment centre at www.yes.on.ca or call 416-504-5516.

And to identify your neighbourhood youth employment centre for hiring made easy at no cost to you, visit www.oayec.org/yejd_locations.html.

JobStart has Midas Touch

By Nick Candiotta

Toronto Sun – October 8, 2003

In March 2003, 21-year-old Darryl Lorde had been out of work for eight months and was undecided about his future.

"I was tired of working for minimum wage and bouncing from job to job," Lorde says. "I wanted a career and needed to decide what direction to take." Enter JobStart.

"Darryl was energetic and really wanted to find a profession," says Merissa Preston, apprenticeship employment consultant with JobStart. "But he had several obstacles we had to overcome."

"In order to get into any kind of training, I needed to get my GED and my driver's license," Lorde recalls.

By August, through Job Connect's literacy and basic skills program, Darryl obtained his GED -- sending him to Preston.

"Within a few days of being referred to me, Darryl had an interview," Preston says. "He was hired and started work at the end of the month." Darryl began a three-week work trial at Midas with an eye towards earning an apprenticeship.

"We had worked with JobStart before and think it is an excellent program," says Midas owner Robin Singh. "And in Darryl we got an excellent employee. He has been great."

So great, in fact, that Darryl has taken on new and additional responsibilities throughout his time with Midas.

"When I first started, I was just doing basic things like oil changes and tire rotations," Lorde remembers. "I wanted to do more so I asked them to teach me more."

"He's been catching on so fast, showing daily improvement," Singh says, "so now he's getting into much harder work. Darryl's a very fast learner."

Those learning skills will be tested over the next five years as Darryl enters Midas' apprenticeship program.

To find out more about the services offered at JobStart, visit them on the Web at www.jobstart-cawl.org or call 416-231-2295.

To identify your neighbourhood youth employment centre for hiring made easy at no cost to you, visit the following Web site: www.oayec.org/yejd_locations.html.

Finding a Plan of Action

By Nick Candiotta

Toronto Sun – October 15, 2003

The biggest thing Marcus Downey was looking for when he arrived at WoodGreen Youth Job Centre was a change.

"I came from a small town looking for job opportunities, but it wasn't working out really well," Downey says. "I moved to the east end and was looking for a fresh start."

"Because he didn't have a job and didn't know what direction he wanted to go in, he had very low self-esteem -- something we definitely wanted to work on," says Gaim Tewelde, a job developer at WoodGreen.

Marcus' employment and financial situations made him a candidate for WoodGreen's Job Connect program. After meeting with a counsellor, Marcus was assigned a job developer.

"We came up with a plan of action to get Marcus working," Tewelde says.

Things moved faster than either could have imagined. During the planning phase, Tewelde found Marcus a placement at Thuna Herbals -- a business established in 1888.

"We needed help with customers, with filling orders, with a number of things," says Roger Lewis, chartered herbalist and store manager. "Marcus was definitely a welcome addition."

And the job was definitely a welcome addition to Marcus' life.

"It's a great environment, great people," Downey says. "It kind of worked out right from the start."

"After two or three days, he knew that's what he wanted to do," Tewelde remembers. "He started to read books and manuals on his own -- he threw himself into his work."

His enthusiasm did not go unnoticed at work. Thuna Herbals ended the subsidized placement -- hiring Marcus as an employee.

"We're very satisfied with his ability -- he's our go to guy," Lewis says.

"I'm a shy person, it usually takes me time to get comfortable," Downey says. "Everybody at Thuna and at Woodgreen did everything to make me comfortable -- I'm very thankful."

"Marcus' story is so great because he's made a complete change, going from an unsure young man to a very confident, very forthcoming individual," Tewelde says.

To identify your neighbourhood youth employment centre for hiring made easy at no cost to you, visit www.oayec.org/yejd_locations.html.

Journey to Triumph

By Nick Candiotta

Toronto Sun – October 22, 2003

Nilofar Deliry's journey to Canada followed the long route. After fleeing Afghanistan in 1996, she spent two years in India before arriving in this country.

She also took the long route to employment via Toronto's Operation Springboard.

With training in hair styling, Nilofar began an initial placement at a salon. Unfortunately, she could not complete the placement because of a family emergency.

"When Nilofar left, I thought that might be the end -- that I might not see her again," says Adriana Terzic, job developer. "But she did return, almost in tears and desperately looking for a job."

"I had no choice but to go back," Deliry says. "After dealing with the family problem, I was alone again and needed to make money somehow -- I wanted any type of job."

Through the Job Connect program, Nilofar began a two-week trial at Mark's Work Wearhouse -- and it was a fit from the start.

"When I first came to Mark's, everybody was friendly and helpful," Deliry recalls. "After just two weeks, I knew this is where I wanted to be. I didn't even think about going back to a hair salon."

"From the start, Nilofar has been fantastic," says Jeremy Brown, store operator. "Her desire to learn and work ethic are both great. In fact, she has come a long way since last October."

He was so impressed with Deliry that he hired her as soon as possible -- and Nilofar has been impressing her boss ever since.

"She does things for us now that people with retail experience and perfect English have trouble doing," Brown says. "She is involved in merchandising and has a number of other duties in the store."

"I'm always trying to learn more," Nilofar says. "I don't ever want something to come up that I can't handle or can't do."

To find out more about Operation Springboard, call 416-977-0089 or visit www.operationspringboard.on.ca.

To identify your neighbourhood youth employment centre for hiring made easy at no cost to you, visit the following website: www.oayec.org/yejd_locations.html.

Pressman Enjoys Future Prospects

By Nick Candiotta

Toronto Sun – October 29, 2003

Reiniere Maghirang arrived in Canada in 1996. In two short years, he was homeless, living in shelters and working in clubs.

"I was kicked out of my Dad's house at 19," Maghirang recalls. "I had nowhere to live."

Enter Eva's Phoenix -- a transitional housing facility that offers a range of employment programs.

"The first thing we needed to take care of was getting Reiniere safe housing," said Andrew Macdonald, social enterprise co-ordinator. "Once he had the basics in place, we were able to concentrate on finding employment."

What Reiniere wanted to do was never in doubt. His mother ran a printing shop in the Philippines -- and Reiniere wanted to follow in her footsteps.

"Printing was his goal," Macdonald said. "The Phoenix Print Shop program was just beginning -- it was a great match."

A hybrid of social service and revenue generation, The Phoenix Print Shop is a small commercial print shop that helps offset some of the costs of the program.

In addition to providing Reiniere with some soft skills and offering a glimpse of the day-to-day routine of a printman, the shop was a springboard to permanent employment.

"One thing we promote is getting out for tours of other shops," Macdonald said. "On one of the tours, he made a connection with someone who was hiring."

That someone was Jeffrey Bush, owner of A-Press Productions in Toronto.

"When I first met Reiniere, he was asking for printing shop information and seemed very sincere," Bush recalls. "I like to hire people who can learn from scratch, so I gave him a chance."

Starting as general help, Reiniere's enthusiasm has led to numerous raises and promotion to a junior pressman.

"Reiniere is a very hard worker and a fast learner," Bush says. "I want to train him to become a press operator because he really wants to do it -- and I think he'd be very good at it."

Reiniere's hard work extends beyond A-Press. He now lives in his own two-bedroom apartment with his younger brother and embraces his role as a peer mentor at Eva's -- sharing his experience with current participants.

To identify your neighbourhood youth employment centre for hiring made easy at no cost to you, visit www.oayec.org/yejd_locations.html.

Offering a Foot in the Door

By Nick Candiotta

Toronto Sun – November 5, 2003

For Wasim Mirza, the goal was very simple. "I was out of a job," the 24-year-old says. "So I wanted -- no, I needed -- to get a job where I could utilize my skills, but it was very, very hard."

Wasim's employment counsellor puts it more succinctly.

"He had just recently lost his job and had used up all of his savings," says Alvin Guthrie, employment counsellor at Toronto's Gateway Café. "He was on the verge of losing his place."

At the recommendation of a friend, Mirza visited the Gateway Café, looking to reverse his fortune.

"At the time, he needed some clothing," Guthrie says. "We made sure his housing situation was secure and took care of the immediate needs before plunging into the job search."

Leery of the workplace environment after a negative employment experience, Mirza's self-esteem and confidence were restored through counselling. He was prepared for an intensive job search -- with some much-needed support.

The first step in the search was completed when he qualified for the Skills Link subsidy -- a program in which the government pays 60% of an employee's wages. The second step was to secure a position -- and again Mirza had some help.

"When he came back from his first interview, he felt better about himself and about getting a job," Guthrie says. "He had a great feeling about the employer."

It turns out the feeling was mutual.

"We needed to hire somebody full time, but because we are a non-profit organization, we could not afford to," says Brendon Noronha, operations manager at the North York Harvest Food Bank. "When I first met Wasim, I knew we had a perfect fit. He's a good young man."

Mirza began his job doing general work almost immediately and has been one of Noronha's best employees ever since.

"We want to make sure when he leaves here, he's a better person and a better worker," Noronha says. "Wasim is already ahead of that -- he's both."

To find out more about the Gateway Café, visit www.gateway-cafe.com or call 416-466-7489. To identify your neighbourhood youth employment centre for hiring made easy at no cost to you, visit www.oayec.org/yejd_locations.html.

A Boost in the Right Direction

By Nick Candiotta

Toronto Sun – November 12, 2003

Twenty-four-year-old Nikki Stewart's employment experience was not uncommon for youths living in the Jane-Finch corridor.

"I was having a hard time finding the right job," Stewart says. "I thought about going back to school, but I really had an interest in doing work with computers."

Enter the Youth Internship Canada Project. A joint venture of Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), JVS Toronto (Jobs Visions Success) and the San Romano Way Revitalization Association, the program targets youths aged 16 to 29 who live in the corridor.

"The program was different from other youth programs in that the youths involved identified themselves as 'at risk'," says Colleen Taffe, employment counsellor for JVS Toronto. "They identified their own weaknesses and needs."

A single mother of two, Stewart was accepted into the program and began 12 weeks of classes dealing with a variety of topics ranging from business attire to CPR instruction.

"The classes taught us a lot of life skills," Stewart says. "We really learned a lot of things that prepared us to go to work."

"Nikki definitely demonstrated great computer skills that were more than just entry level," Taffe says. "At the end of the 12 weeks ... I was confident we could place Nikki in a computer-related position."

Enter Global eText Incorporated. The adaptive technology company enthusiastically welcomed Stewart into the fold.

"Our clientele is generally considered 'at risk' so in that sense it was a great fit," says Lisa Allen, president and CEO. "Also, the company started at York University so we all live, or have lived, in the Jane-Finch corridor."

Beginning with data entry, Nikki has seen her duties and responsibilities grow weekly. She's learned office etiquette and client preparation, and the goal is to make her an executive administration assistant capable of working at any company.

"It is exactly what I wanted to get into," Stewart says. "I've learned a lot to this point and am sure I'll keep learning."

To find out more about the Youth Internship Canada program, call 416-395-8875. To identify your neighbourhood youth employment centre for hiring made easy at no cost to you, visit www.oayec.org/yejd_locations.html.

Saji Joseph Stitches Up a Job

By Nick Candiotta

Toronto Sun – November 19, 2003

Twenty-three-year-old Saji Joseph was out of school, out of work and living in a youth shelter. In fact, he had been out of work for almost one year when he approached the YMCA in March.

"Saji had some difficulty holding onto a job in the past," says Kenneth Lyons, job developer/job coach. "There were some skills and training that he needed -- that's what we could offer."

Enrolled initially in the JobConnect program, Joseph met first with an employment counsellor before being assigned a job counsellor. With his past experience in retail, Joseph's counsellor was able to find him a job placement -- one that did not work out.

"The experience really rattled his confidence," Lyons says. "That's when his job counsellor asked me to get involved."

Lyons and Joseph began meeting and discussing issues that could arise in employment. Joseph also began working on his resume with a resource specialist and set up his voice mail and e-mail accounts at the YMCA office.

"He really accessed all of our services," Lyons says. "That, as much as anything else, contributed to his success."

Most importantly, Lyons and Joseph also began preparing for another interview -- preparation that would soon be put to good use.

"Saji dropped his resume off at Stitches of his own accord -- I had no idea," Lyons recalls. "He just came back from the interview and told me."

"Saji just came to us," says Joann Singh, manager of Stitches.

"We certainly encourage the youth to strike out on their own like that -- the way Saji did," Lyons says. "It showed us, and the employer, that he had regained his confidence."

In fact, Joseph's confidence was evident to his new employer from the start.

"He's very outgoing and wasn't shy at all," Singh remembers. "He's a very quick learner - - that served him well."

So well, in fact, that Joseph has moved from sales associate to a supervisory position in just over two months.

To find out more about the YMCA's employment services, including locations, visit www.ymcatoronto.org.

To identify your neighbourhood youth employment centre for hiring made easy at no cost to you, visit www.oayec.org/yeid_locations.html.

Auto Body Apprentice Gets a Boost

By Nick Candiotta

Toronto Sun – November 26, 2003

Twenty-five-year-old Jaime Ansley approached the Alternative Youth Centre for Employment (AYCE) with a purpose -- she wanted an auto body apprenticeship.

"It's something I've wanted forever," Ansley says. "I used to work on cars with my Dad. That's where my love for the work started."

Fortunately for Ansley, AYCE had an apprenticeship plan.

"Our partnership with Centennial (College) and their apprenticeship program, was actually driven by the industry itself," says Edmund Bulaclac, job developer at AYCE. "They were having problems finding employees, so a committee was set up to help combat this shortage."

The first step for Ansley was to make a presentation to the local industry committee illustrating her level of interest in the apprenticeship program.

"It was nerve-racking," Ansley recalls. "They asked a lot of questions, including a number of questions about my future, but I think my interest in the industry came through."

The committee agreed. In fact, Jaime Ansley was the only successful female candidate. Now she just needed a job.

Enter Bulaclac.

The job developer set up an interview with Ken's Auto Body -- and the results were very positive.

"He liked Jamie right away," Bulaclac remembers. "I could tell this was going to be a positive experience for both parties."

As it turned out, Bulaclac's prediction was very accurate.

"Jaime has been a great addition to our staff," says Ken Jaggernauth, owner. "She is a very determined person. Just watching the way she works, you can tell she is made to do this."

Jaggernauth has plenty of opportunity to see her in action. In addition to three-hour classes on Tuesday and Thursday, Ansley works at the shop every day, but she wouldn't have it any other way.

"It's great. I love doing the work, but I want to do more," Ansley says. "I know it's just a matter of time."

For more information about AYCE, visit them on the Web at www.ayce.on.ca or call 416-491-7000. To identify your neighbourhood youth employment centre for hiring made easy at no cost to you, visit www.oayec.org/yejd_locations.html.

Opening the Door to a Future

By Nick Candiotta

Toronto Sun – December 3, 2003

Colin Lupton knew an education would open up all the doors he couldn't -- he just needed somewhere to start.

"I was living at Eva's Phoenix and having trouble finding a job," says 21-year-old Lupton. "I needed to get my GED. If I did, I knew it would be much easier to get a job."

Enter the Employment Skills Development Program (ESDP) at St. Christopher's House.

"The program addresses educational barriers to employment," says Angela Barrass, employment counsellor. "More specifically, we help people get their high school equivalency -- the GED."

The ESDP at St. Christopher's allows participants to create their own schedule while preparing for the GED test, but it wasn't time that Lupton needed.

"He's a really bright guy, so he didn't need much preparation time," Barrass recalls. "He needed time to get the money together to take the test itself."

As Colin prepared financially, he shifted his educational focus to the Transitional Year Program at the University of Toronto.

"We felt it was the perfect program for Colin -- it would prepare him for university," Barrass says. "That was the ultimate goal."

The first step in that process was passed when Colin earned his GED.

"He scored really high on the test, but next up was the work involved in applying for the Transitional Year Program -- from applying for OSAP to all the additional paperwork," Barrass added.

But the eight months of work definitely paid off. Lupton earned admission into the Transitional Year Program -- and there have already been some changes.

"I'm living on campus now," Lupton says. "I attend two lectures a day. There are nine courses throughout the year, but I'm most interested in sociology, anthropology and philosophy -- that's the area where I'd like to continue my studies."

For more information about the various programs offered at St. Christopher's House, call 416-553-8285. To identify your neighbourhood youth employment centre for hiring made easy at no cost to you, visit the web site at www.oayec.org/yejd_locations.html.

Designing a Productive Future

Toronto Sun – December 10, 2003

Diana Chapa, a newcomer to Canada and a sole-support parent, came to Completing The Circle (CTC) hoping to secure a position in the field of graphic design.

Although Chapa had the requisite university education and work experience in her native country, she was struggling to find work in Toronto. Most employers she approached told Diana that she needed Canadian work experience before she would be considered as a candidate.

Chapa grew very concerned that she might not be able to find any work to support herself and her daughter. Participating in the pre-employment workshops at CTC, where she received individual support and training to develop her self-marketing abilities,

Chapa soon began to attract more interest from employers.

Unfortunately, in each case, they were not able to see past the "no Canadian experience" obstacle. They were unwilling to take advantage of the expertise and positive attitude she would bring to their organization.

That all changed one day when Pina Trimarchi, employment advisor at CTC, received a call from Lorraine Bossier of AVW-TELAV. Having previously established an effective relationship with the audio visual solutions company by connecting them with young, skilled and motivated workers, Trimarchi was informed of the need to fill a two-month contract position for an administrative assistant "ASAP."

Trimarchi introduced Chapa to Bossier. Although the position was not directly in her field of expertise, Chapa was eager to acquire any Canadian experience.

The interview was successful and Chapa was subsequently hired for the position. And Chapa proved to be a valuable asset, demonstrating expertise in a variety of areas. She was so valuable that her contact was extended twice.

Unfortunately, there was not a permanent position available for Chapa; however, a AVW-TELAV co-worker recognized Diana's potential and thought she would be an ideal candidate for an administration position that had recently become available for a client company.

To Diana's delight, the responsibilities of this position also had a graphic design component.

Diana's willingness to be flexible with respect to her employment objectives paid off in the end. And her employer's willingness to recognize her experience and expertise lead to this success story.

For more information about Completing The Circle, call 416-243-0066 or visit ["www.completingthecircle.ca"](http://www.completingthecircle.ca). To identify your neighbourhood youth employment centre for hiring made easy at no cost to you, visit www.oayec.org/yejd_locations.html.