

Connecting youth to employment across the province

by Stella Shepard

The **Connection 2 Employment** program administered by the East Prince Youth Development Centre (EPYDC) is assisting youth with barriers to secure employment.

More than 140 youth were interviewed, but there was space for only 48 participants for the 10-week program that was offered in O’Leary, Summerside, Charlottetown, and Montague.

“The program assisted youth who may have fallen between the cracks and needed support to bridge the gap to employment by providing group-based training sessions,” says **Barb Broome**, EPYDC Manager.

“Workforce and Advanced Learning and SkillsPEI recognize the needs of youth on PEI and are extremely supportive in assisting us to help youth to overcome barriers to employment such as homelessness, poverty, low education, and a lack of work experience and skills to find and maintain employment.

“Ninety percent of participants secured year-round employment through the program. There was a four-week on-the-job training opportunity for participants who had not secured employment by the end of the 10 weeks. The Coordinator from each area will remain on staff to assist them.

“The overwhelming number of youth who want and need this program is evident in the number of applications we received in a short time. The number of participants who secured employment or are returning to school speaks volumes to what our youth can achieve when someone gives them a hand up.”

The youth toured various businesses and educational institutions. They received specialized training in First Aid, CPR, WHMIS, WorldHost, and Food Safety certification, and also took personal growth and self-awareness training through the Adventure Group.

The group participated in life and employability skills workshops. Guest speakers covered topics such as mental health, addictions, legal aid, financial counselling, and researching the local job market. As well, they were introduced to numerous employers willing to train and hire youth.

Comments from facilitators

“The program inspired, provided awareness, skills, and opportunity that helped to motivate the youth in our rural communities to become employed,” says **Carla Roberston**, O’Leary Facilitator.

“At the end of the 10-week in-class portion of the program, we are pleased to say that nine out of our 12 participants already gained employment,” says **Karen Noye**, Facilitator for Summerside. “The prospects for the other three are looking very good as well.”

“Connection 2 Employment has not only impacted the lives of the youth, but mine as well,” says **Ashley Racette**, Facilitator for Charlottetown. “Watching them grow as people and make a positive impact in the PEI workforce has made this program a complete success.”



The youth and staff at the Montague Connection 2 Employment location. “Our youth are our people of tomorrow,” says **Joyce Newcombe**, Facilitator. “Never underestimate their intelligence. They too deserve opportunities.”

Comments from the participants

Participant **Lucas Woods** was the speaker at the closing ceremony for the Connection 2 Employment program in Montague.

“Hard work and dedication can go a long way,” says Lucas. “This program has been a great help to learn the necessary skills to find jobs.

“Through the program, I found work at the Atlantic Superstore, which is great because I don’t have transportation and the store is walking distance from where I live.

“This program needs to continue to assist other youth to develop the necessary job search and life skills that could eventually lead to employment.”

“I feel like I’ve grown a lot and I have gained a lot of confidence,” says **Liam Mullen**. “Before I got here, I had no idea what I wanted to do. Now I have confidence, goals, and direction.”

“I feel like we are more informed about the next steps we need to make,” says **Leah MacQuarrie**. “Now we feel like we are not alone, and we have the supports we need.”

“Connection 2 Employment has been a great experience for me,” says **Chloe Jones**. “I have been given a lot of guidance along the way that I think everyone needs at the end of the day. I am very happy I had the opportunity to take this program and meet new people and experience new things.”

The Honourable **Allen Roach**, Minister of Finance, delivered a message of hope to the youth. “I want to tell you how proud I am of each of you,” says the Minister. “There are a lot of jobs out there, and you have done the most crucial thing to prepare yourself for your future.

“Your employers will have great confidence in you because of your skills and confidence. You are now better prepared for the workforce, so make your place in the community and in life.”

For more information about the **East Prince Youth Development Centre**, visit www.epydc.org.

Funding is provided through the Canada/PEI Labour Market Development Agreement and the Canada-PEI Job Fund Agreement.

Employment-related events, workshops, and training at your fingertips

Date	Event	Organization
June 20th, 9 am-12 am, Charlottetown office	Employer Speaker Series	Council of People with Disabilities For more information, call: Charlottetown: 902-892-9149 Summerside: 902-436-9259 Montague: 902-838-5878
June 21st, 9 am-12 am, Summerside office		
June 22, 9 am-12 am, Montague office		

More events, workshops, and training dates at www.employmentjourney.com