

Kendall Hogeboom receives the fourth annual Biggs Award from Flowercart

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In 2004 Flowercart introduced the Biggs Award, to point out people who've been placed in their job by Partners in Employment Outreach and who demonstrate the work skills taught and supported by our Community Employment Services program. The 2007 Biggs Award recipient is Kendall Hogeboom.

I first met Kendall in December 2004. He was 19. He was a client of Partners in Employment Outreach looking for work. He had a drivers' license but no car. We hired Kendall as one of our Michelin Contract employees to do car washing for us on the weekends at the Michelin plant. He also had some part-time work at TMC Law and continued to seek other work through Partners in Employment Outreach. Like many teenagers, Kendall didn't take his job search or his job opportunities all that seriously. For example, during the summer he was invited to participate with a grape-picking crew from Partners in Employment and he went out to work with them one day. The next day he did not go to work; he told us it was because his sister was visiting from Africa. Later we found out that her visit was a month long.

In August of 2005 Kendall was referred to our Transition-to-Work program. I met with him and asked him what he hoped to get from the program. Even though he hadn't had very much work experience at that point, Kendall already had a pretty clear vision of where he was headed with his life. He had an idea of the type of work that would be right for him. He said he was picturing himself working in a store, but "definitely not on the cash". He told me that he was afraid of giving the wrong change. I told him I understood that concern. Then I gave him a calculator and asked him if his hamburger came to \$4.87 and he gave a \$20 bill how much change would he get -- he figured that out very quickly. I told him he could probably learn to operate a cash register! I asked him what else he thought he ought to learn from our program and he said that he had had a work placement where he did pretty much the same thing over and over; he said that was because he was too nervous to ask for something else so he knew that he needed to get better at asking for help and asking to do different things at a job.

I asked him how he thought his life would be different as a result of taking the Transition-to-Work program. He said he would have a full-time job and be enjoying a regular paycheque. He said he wanted to make "enough money so I can be in an apartment of my own". He spoke with pride about being able to earn his own money and pay for food and rent. He told me that he thought cash

register skills would be good to know, and he hoped to develop better people skills.

By November that year our Transition to Work Counsellor and Job Coach had been training and supporting Kendall to learn all that he needed to know to do the job at his work experience placement at Kent Co-op. Kendall was frequently doing cash and credit transactions, so he was helped to apply for a regular job there. In January he was hired by the Co-op and left Transition-to-Work. Shortly afterwards, Kendall resigned his position as our car washer at Michelin.

Dawna Havill, one of our Supportive Co-workers, continued to check in on Kendall at his job. Since beginning his work at Kent Co-op, we have known when Kendall got a car, moved into his own apartment, and got engaged!

Early in December 2006 Dawna stopped by to see if he was planning to come to our Holiday Gathering. Kendall said he couldn't because he had to work. When Dawna told me that, I thought back to that time when he had turned down a day of work -- to me, his commitment to his work and to his employer was a clear indicator of the shift that had taken place in him.

Looking back over the past 2 1/2 years, it's quite easy to see the changes that have taken place for Kendall: from being afraid to make change to being able to operate a cash register, debit machine, and do credit card transactions; from turning down work for personal reasons to not going to a party because he had a job to do. These are great changes to observe. As his supervisor at the Coop, Marvin Rhyno, has said, "Kendall has proven to be a valuable employee. He provides excellent customer service and carries on his other duties with great care. Kendall shows great potential for future positions in our business."

I would say that the future looks bright for Kendall Hogeboom. The winner of Flowercart's 2007 Biggs Award.