

1986

Student takes the bull by the horns

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Calvin
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Don Valade Photo

Connie Lamarche (left) keeps busy at her wood-cutting business, with help from sisters Tammy and Shari.

For many students in small communities, finding a summer job can be quite a chore, but one young girl proceeded to go out and start her own business.

Connie Lamarche, 15, of Calvin Township, not only manages one but two businesses. Her mother, Barbara, helps her to manage them.

The joint venture between Connie and her two younger sisters, Shari, 14, and Tammy, 9, provides the service of fuelwood for campers, and also provides a coin-operated washer and dryer at one of the campgrounds at Samuel de Champlain Provincial Park. The park is about nine miles from Mattawa.

Connie, along with her mother's help, first had to bid for the two privately run concessions through the Ministry of Natural Resources. When that was accomplished, Connie applied for a Student Venture Capital Program grant.

To get the application, she had to contact Jack Whalen, high school guidance counsellor at F.J. McElligott, the school she attended this year. She then got it approved by the Mattawa Chamber of Commerce and received a \$1,500 grant.

The overhead to begin the businesses was quite high, namely the insurance for the woodyard in the park, logs for firewood, and the purchase of the washer and dryer. Therefore, the grant was a welcome sight. Connie feels the washer and dryer are a risk because she's only got a one-year contract from the ministry.

There was also a lot of labor involved, especially at the woodyard where wood had to be cut, split and piled. Most of the heavy

work was done by Connie's father, and any maintenance work on the washer and dryer will be done by him also.

Both concessions began on June 20 and will run to the end of September. The washer and dryer can be used by the campers any time while the woodyard is open every evening from 5 to 9 p.m.

The charge for wood is \$2.50 per bundle. To use the washer, it will cost \$1, while the dryer costs only 50 cents. The money made from the concessions will go into a college fund for the three girls.

Connie, who is going into Grade 10 next year, hopes to make a law clerk or assistant as a career. The other girls are not sure yet what they want to do.

All three girls are working very hard to satisfy the campers of the park and are hoping to extend the contracts of the two concessions. They are already talking about expanding to other areas for next summer's camping season.