

Program helps native youth stay in school

By Vicki White *Aug 16/90*
Expositor Staff

This spring 17-year-old Tammy General said she would never go back to school.

Now after participating in a work program for potential dropouts, she plans to go to college so she can get a job working with children.

Tammy is one of eight native students in the seven-week Work Experience

Workshop funded by the federal government and run by the Pine Tree Native Centre.

The government also funds the program in several other local communities.

"I was on the verge of quitting school," she says. "I thought it was a waste of time. But after I was in here for a couple weeks I realized I needed more education to go on to do what I want to do."

Got job

With the help of the program, Tammy got a job at the day camp in Ohsweken. She hopes the experience will help her get a job there next summer, too.

Co-ordinator Lana Johnson says the program offers students with low self-esteem, financial troubles or drug and alcohol problems "an idea of what the work force is like" through job placements.

Nancy Hill, director of the Pine Tree Centre, says a recent survey showed "a very high dropout rate with the native kids" — which makes the program particularly important for native students.

Along with work experience, the students attend classroom sessions one day a week. They learn about setting career goals, writing resumes and other skills to help them succeed in the workforce.

"They wanted us to get them low-paying jobs that they would only be able to do with Grade 8 education" so they would find out the importance of school, Ms. Johnson says.



Wayne Roper, Expositor

Lynda McNabb directs Tammy General in performing Heimlich manoeuvre on Lenny Foley

learned that lesson after his job at the Mckerlie-Millen auto shop. He was pleased with the chance to get some valuable training and to find out what it's like to be a mechanic.

"I wouldn't want to do it all the time because it's a bit boring," said the 15-year-old Brantford Collegiate Institute student.

Though the government pays salaries of students employed under the program, it can be difficult to find companies willing to participate.

Ms. Johnson says those that do rarely have complaints.

Lenny Foley may have