

Co-operative program is Jennifer's cup of tea

By BRUCE STAPLEY

Jennifer Stover hopes some day to have her own accounting business. She's off to a good start.

The 17-year-old student at Stouffville Dist. Secondary School is enrolled in the Grade 12 accounting course and participating in the school's co-op program.

This arrangement incorporates in-school academics with employment with a local firm in a field of interest to the student.

Purpose behind the co-op program is to offer students practical exposure

to the work-a-day world. They're given the opportunity to 'try on a career' that might appeal to them.

While some use the program as a career step, others find they really don't want to pursue what they originally thought might be right.

Jennifer, with the help of accounting teacher Brian Kettlewell, applied to Stouffville Machine Inc. last year at the end of Grade 11. Following acceptance from owner Charles Jackson, she went to work in the office last August.

"Most students don't start their co-

op placement until October," Jennifer says. "But I worked for them three days a week until school started, with pay."

The businesses are not usually required to pay students, but Jennifer has proved a valuable addition to the company's staff.

"I now work from 1 to 3:15 p.m. every other school day," she explains. "I usually stay on until 4:30 and I'm paid for the extra time."

According to Mr. Kettlewell, Jennifer took to the job training "like a duck to water. Jennifer has been one of our most successful co-op placements," he says.

Jennifer admits it's essential that a co-op student have a good placement.

"I've known some kids who have ended up in the wrong area of interest," she says. "But I also know others who've been successfully placed."

Jennifer first thought she'd be rele-

gated to menial tasks when she started her placement, but was pleasantly surprised.

"My supervisor, Sheelagh Adams, took me under her wing right from the start," Jennifer says. "I started off doing little bits and pieces, but as I learned, Mrs. Adams allowed me to do just about everything. I picked it up quickly."

As a result of her competence, Jennifer has, on occasions, been left to run the office on her own.

Co-op students are asked to keep daily journals, recording their on-the-job experiences both good and bad. This, along with an evaluation from the student's on-the-job supervisor, is assessed monthly by Mr. Kettlewell and discussed with the boy or girl.

During these monthly sessions, or "reflective days" as they're called, guest speakers are welcomed to the school to lecture on such topics as interviews and how to act in an office.

Jennifer, also works part-time as a cashier at Stouffville's Canadian Tire. She hopes to continue at Stouffville Machine Inc. as long as possible.

"The people are really friendly," she insists. "That's so helpful."

"I feel like I really belong. They treat me like any other employee, not like a kid who's trying to learn something," Jennifer explains.

Jennifer hopes to graduate from the University of Toronto with her Bachelor of Arts degree before specializing in Accounting. Her ultimate plan is to establish her own accounting business.

"I like taking charge," she admits. "I like doing things on my own."

"You work to make accounts balance. When they do, you feel good. It's challenging," she adds.

"I learn many things on-the-job. Then, a few months later, we take it in school so I get the jump on everyone else," she concludes.



Jennifer Stover is shown here with her on-the-job co-op supervisor Sheelagh Adams.

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