

COALITION CONNECTOR



A PUBLICATION OF THE COALITION FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

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Employment
PAH!



PAH is an expression meaning victory or success in American Sign Language (ASL) - the language of the Deaf in Canada. PAH is all

about empowerment for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing. (Deaf, with a capital D is significant in that the deaf share a language, culture and solidarity rather than just a medical condition.)

As acknowledgement of the special needs inherent in offering programs to the Deaf, the Coalition for Persons with Disabilities offers a 22-day workshop, **Employment PAH**, designed to prepare the Deaf to be employment ready. The workshop was first offered in December 2004, and over the past three years, 65 people have come through the doors.

The criteria for enrolling in Employment PAH are fluency in ASL and to be under- or unemployed. It is open to three to five people per session.

The workshop focuses on information gathering. Most information collected by the Hearing community is through word-of-mouth, casual conversations, tidbits overheard or by picking up the telephone. In this respect, Deaf jobseekers are at a disadvantage. Participants are trained on how to pull together the necessary information needed to navigate through the employment barriers.

Literacy skills are a challenge. According to the article, *Deafness as Culture*, by Edward Dolnik, the deaf score poorly on tests of English skills. The average deaf

Success...finally!

16-year old reads at the level of a hearing eight-year old. As a result, when deaf students leave school, 75 per cent cannot read a newspaper and they write English as if it were a foreign language. ASL is a full-fledged language, with its own grammar, sentence structure and rules that differ from the spoken and written English language. Sadly, ASL has not been used by the education system.

When the Deaf read a brochure, application form or job posting, some words used may not be recognized. Subsequently, answers on application forms or during interviews may be answered incorrectly or taken out of context. PAH teaches the Deaf to recognize the important words.

Majority culture, or corporate culture, and Deaf culture are examined for differences and commonalities. Employer expectations, most of which are unspoken, are discussed. In addition, PAH offers a cultural exchange between the Deaf participants and members of the hearing community, which includes the business and service sectors and interested people.

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“PAH
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The exchange is meant to bring the myths and misunderstandings to the forefront and problem solve together. Strategies are offered and solutions discussed by both sides.

PAH takes a holistic approach to employment readiness. More one-on-one time is spent with each participant because of the differences in individual employment goals. In addition to working with the participant to set realistic employment goals and self-market themselves by developing resumes, cover letters and preparing for interviews, PAH takes a more personal approach.

Personal belief systems are examined for negative self-talk and proactive strategies are developed to overcome them. Additionally, participants are empowered to take control of their personal and professional lives.

The end result is the Deaf come away better prepared to search for employment in a hearing world with an improved understanding of themselves and realistic expectations to participate in the work world. Success...finally! *

Cutting-edge Technology used to Overcome Barriers

Jellian Redway from Brampton has been visually impaired since birth. She finished school with the assistance of fellow students, teachers and a shared enlarger. It was difficult, but she completed her studies.

Fortunately, large strides in technology over the past few years have allowed her a greater range of supports. Assistive technology plays an important role in assisting Jellian and other people who are visually impaired to live more independently and also to pursue competitive employment thereby offering more financial independence. "The Practice Firm offers me a great opportunity to learn to use the technology in a work environment," stated Jellian.

"Assistive technology opens opportunities electronically that weren't previously available for people who are blind, deaf-blind and people who have mobility

impairments," stated Stephen Largy, program manager, Practice Firm for Persons with Disabilities.

Adaptive technology offers solutions for people who have employment barriers. Technologies could also offer new and significant opportunities to the sections of the community that have been excluded from employment opportunities in the past.

The Practice Firm for Persons with Disabilities provides access to adaptive technology and training to participants with a variety of needs. Once barriers to success have been identified in persons with disabilities, suitable technology can be matched to the individual's needs. The following are just a sample of the technology available at the Practice Firm:

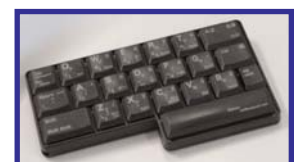
For people who are visually impaired or have low vision, there are hardware and software applications, such as Zoom Text xFont Magnification. Zoom Text allows low vision computer users to see, hear and use their computers with greater productivity. The software reproduces high-definition text, screen enhancements improve the clarity of the text and filter effects adjust colour, contrast and brightness. Users are able to locate and follow text while tabbing or using a speech synthesizer.



Desktop Video Magnifiers or closed circuit television uses a video camera to display a magnified image on a monitor or television screen. Anything placed under the magnifier system is enlarged two to 50 times its original size.

Screen readers, such as JAWS (Job Access With Speech) for Windows provides users access to software applications and the Internet. It uses an integrated voice synthesizer to read the content of the computer screen to speakers. It provides enhanced support for variety of Windows software applications.

Single-handed keyboards have been developed to meet the needs of those who perform keyboard operations with one hand. Letters on the keyboard are in the same position as a regular keyboard. To access the other side of the keyboard, the space bar is held down. Both left and right



Trade Fair brings New Business

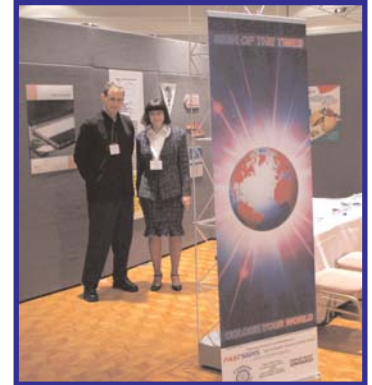
Trade shows are opportunities for industry leaders, retailers and consumers to connect in a dynamic environment to exchange information, meet insiders and get their hands on the latest products. One of the great things about a show is that everything you care about is gathered together under one roof for your perusal - and, perhaps, eventual purchase. Trade shows also attract people seeking employment in a particular field, which fits perfectly with the concept of the practice firm.

A practice firm is essentially a 'virtual' business which simulates the day-to-day operations of a conventional company, without actually selling to the public. Products and services are traded within the practice firm network, with all the aspects of a conventional business - marketing, accounting, and administration -

encompassed in the day-to-day operations. The purpose is to give participants work experience and help them develop relevant skills to be used in the workplace.

Sign of the Times is the only Canadian practice firm devoted exclusively to persons with disabilities, who often face the greatest challenges when it comes to finding employment.

"The trade show provides a unique opportunity for persons with disabilities to experience the competitive aspect of marketing and sales in a business environment," says Steve Largy, program manager, Sign of the Times. Quite often, participants have been out of the workforce for extended periods of time, and this experience provides a bridge to employment.



"I've benefited from the teamwork and practical day-to-day experience in an office environment," says Kathy, a participant who recently completed the twelve-week program. "Learning from other participants in a supportive environment has also been enjoyable. Being involved in preparations for the show - researching the booth layout and helping to design the graphic panels - has been a good experience. I think the project has brought a lot of energy into the office and spiked people's motivation."

At the October trade show, 33 practice firms were represented with a wide range of products such as furniture, wine and golfing accessories on display. Sign of the Times was there to promote its 'virtual' line of commercial signs - and also talk about the services provides to job seekers.

The trade show also attracted about 300 students who were given credits to spend on products and services. The primary purpose of the Canadian Practice Firm Trade Fair is to generate a large volume of 'orders', which participants will fill during the next several months at their respective practice firms. A single trade show can produce thousands of orders, which puts the accounting and customer service departments into high gear, which in turn allows participants to apply the skills they will later use in the workplace. *

Tips

from
Discover your
Personal Power

If you can imagine it, then you can have it. Your mind is a powerful tool with the ability to motivate or hamper choices you make in your life. Get your mind working for you so you create the things you want in life while eliminating the things you don't want. Discover Your Personal Power and achieve your potential.

1. Tap into the power of your mind.
2. Learn to control your thoughts and beliefs.
3. Change negative beliefs into positive ones.
4. Use positive beliefs about yourself to develop positive behaviors.
5. Exercise the power of your mind and build mental 'muscle'.
6. Do little things each day to make a positive change in the world around you.
7. Reflect on each day and identify one or two positive things you accomplished.
8. Do things you enjoy.
9. Be proud of who you are and do not compare yourself to others.
10. Get regular exercise and eat healthy food.



Welcome Aboard!

The Coalition for Persons with Disabilities is pleased to welcome Ryan Machete to its staff. Ryan joins the Coalition as a Job Developer after a successful career with Rona Ontario Inc., which included working first as a Risk Analyst followed by a position as Operations Manager. Ryan was responsible for hiring, training, skills development and succession planning.



Ryan is very excited about joining the Coalition and Employment ACCESS team and looks forward to working closely with his clients so they can achieve their employment goals.

Ryan will work with persons with disabilities to develop skills that they will apply in the workplace and to acquire competitive employment. He will also work with employers to assist in integrating the new employee to the workplace. *

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Technology... >> *Continued from page 2*

handed models are available and can be used with both a PC and a Mac.

The impact of assistive technology on the workplace is far more widespread than many realize. Whether born with a disability, injured or affected by disease or age, the development of the technological solutions levels the playing field. "Computer training is one of the most effective ways we can assist persons with disabilities in living and functioning more independently," said Stephen Largy. *

Connections 2008 Resource Fair for Persons with Disabilities

Mark your calendars
May 9 and 10



Join us for our 9th Annual Resource Fair!