

Nepean/Barrhaven EMC

Student has rewarding summer as camp counsellor

Posted Sep 6, 2012 By Kristy Strauss

EMC community - Carlington teen Marwan Saeed needed a summer job, so he looked to the Youth Services Bureau's summer youth employment program for help.

At 16 years old, Saeed was able to land his first summer job as a counsellor working with children at the Alexander Community Centre in Carlington.

"I enjoyed the job," said Saeed, who is starting Grade 10 at Merivale High School this fall.

Saeed was able to land the job at a place where he used to volunteer. On Aug. 29, he celebrated with other teens who took part in the summer program at a gathering that took place at the Jim Durrell Centre.

"A lot of my friends come from the YSB," Saeed said, adding he wasn't nervous the day before having to say a speech at the celebration.

Last year, the program gave 240 Ottawa youth, ages 15 to 18, their first summer jobs. They took part in pre-employment workshops before starting paid six-week work placements in fields such as recreation, business and youth leadership.

It was the first job for all the youth placed, and the first time they received their own paycheques.

Saeed said it was important for him to work with children.

"I learned how to communicate with kids," he said, adding as part of his job he was also able to coach a basketball team. "I learned leadership skills. I wanted to be a role model."

Saeed said that growing up, his parents were role models to him and he hopes to someday become a teacher and work with children.

He said his advice to other young people seeking employment is to have a positive attitude and to take the job seriously.

"Don't be shy," Saeed said. "It's rewarding in the end."

Now that the summer is over, Saeed said he wants to thank the Youth Services Bureau and the Alexander Community Centre for the experience.

"It feels good," he said. "It went by quick."

His boss was Earl Jones, who has been working with the program for six years, matching up YSB students, and often hiring several to stay on.

"Every year I have two or three that shine, they turn around and become role models," he said to the YSB students graduating from the summer program. "Don't ever say to yourself, I'm too young. A lot of employers look for a shining student."

Courtney Bennett, 16, was excited to have had the chance to work in an office environment during the summer.

She worked in the office at the Computer Sciences Corporation in Kanata for the six weeks, and while she doesn't plan to work in the high-technology field - she is shooting for a PhD in social sciences - she found the experience beneficial.

A Grade 12 student at the Achievement Centre at Algonquin College, she worked with filing, data entry and human resources.

"It's not something you usually get to do at my age," she said. "Being in the office, it's nice to get a paycheque and put some aside for post-secondary."

Courtney said her job allowed her to be independent, adding that she did spend some of the money - buying hair dye, and tickets to movies with her friends.

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Kristy Strauss, Metroland
Marwan Saeed spent his summer working at the Alexander Community Centre in Carlington thanks to the Youth Services Bureau.

"It will definitely help me with jobs, because everyone wants someone with work experience," she said, adding she will try and work in an office environment again while in university. "We all got these chances that are going to give us more than our first job."

For more information on the Youth Services Bureau, visit www.ysb.on.ca.

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