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photo by Amanda Cribdon Photography

Tristan Koster: Igniting His Passion

It is no surprise that Tristan Koster is entering Level 2 of his technical training as an Auto Service Technician before he turns 20. It is also no surprise that his mother Cindy remembered that "Tristan had a love of cars before he could walk and I knew he would turn that passion into a career." At age five, Tristan started working on old cars with his family, clear evidence that a distinct pathway was already starting to take shape!

When he started at Parkland Secondary he took an auto course that ignited his passion for the Auto Service Program. It helped him learn the theoretical aspects of the trade as well as enhance his technical knowledge. In grade 10 Tristan helped a buddy build a Go Kart, welding the custom exhaust system and building the engine. His entry into the Career Centre was not far off. After meeting Career Teacher Colleen McNamee he was on his way. Colleen created a three-year plan with Tristan that included attending the Auto Foundation/Level 1 program at Camosun College. The dual credit program allows students to earn high school credit while earning their Level 1 certification and, to add even more incentives for Tristan, the school district pays for the tuition!

As part of their application to this program, students need to complete 30 hours in the trade area selected. Tristan's dream was starting to take shape. He began working at Sidney Transmission and Autocare as a "shop kid" and then was signed on as a Youth Apprentice while he was in Grade 11! Tristan is still working there as a valued full-time worker and a part of their team. He has successfully completed the YWIT program and will be presented with his \$1,000 scholarship this spring.

Accepted into the Auto Foundation/Level 1 program for his Grade 12 year, Tristan was on his way. A nasty pandemic, putting some students' programs in jeopardy, was not going to interfere with Tristan's future plans. Entering the Camosun program during Covid was not what Tristan had imagined, but Ben Haber, South Island Partnership Coordinator at Camosun, was a fabulous support and became key to his success. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays were hands-on days at the college and Tuesdays and Thursdays were online learning days. Tristan is a hands-on learner but with Ben's support he was able to adjust to the schedule and used his perseverance to find new ways of learning. All this during a pandemic is quite an accomplishment.



The Foundation program at Camosun also opened his eyes to other trades and opportunities. Tristan was about to discover another passion: Metal Fabrication. After he finishes his Red Seal in Auto Service Technician he hopes to go back to school again to become a Metal Fabrication Technician as well. No doubt he is beginning the process of becoming a lifelong learner.

Tristan has big dreams for his future and is so thankful he got a jump start on them in high school! His mom hopes more students look into these programs. She is so proud of her son and feels that "being a part of this program during high school kept Tristan motivated and excited to move forward on his future career plans. At a time when many youths can so easily become distracted and unfocused on what lies ahead for them, knowing he was part of this Apprenticeship Program gave him a drive and enthusiasm that was amazing to watch." His journey was an amazing one to be part of and we are very proud of his accomplishments and how hard he has worked. There will be no stopping Tristan now.