

Isabella McHenry and Hannah Butler

by Stu Rhodes

..... Every year young women in Saanich School District take advantage of the growing number and variety of trade training programs available to them. Past *Seaside Magazine* columns have featured profiles on girls who have completed the Welding program, Hairstylist program, and even the Dairy Production Technician program. In this month's "Women to Watch" edition, we get a chance to check in on two young ladies pursuing their passion as an Automotive Service Technician and a Professional Cook.

"I might be tiny, but I'm tough," proclaimed a five-foot, two-inch Isabella McHenry when asked how she was managing in her non-traditional role as an apprentice Auto Service Technician (AST). "My uncle owns a commercial transport service shop. I first got interested in the trade listening to my cousin and him talking about the kind of work they do at my uncle's shop."

After completing a summer of work experience at her uncle's business, Isabella applied for the AST Foundation program at Camosun College as part of the Youth Work In Trades program Saanich offers in partnership with Industry Training Authority of BC. Isabella also took the small engine course at Claremont Secondary, which further piqued her interest in mechanics in general.

After successfully completing the AST program, Isabella landed a job at Dunsmuir Super Service where she recently became indentured as a youth apprentice. She loves working there and loves the way they treat her. "They treat me like an apprentice, not like a girl. I like the work, even when it isn't easy. You have to be all in, or don't bother at all!" Apparently they like her too. Her boss, Doug Buchanan said: "She works extremely well with others; gender doesn't even come into play. She takes initiative and finds tasks to keep herself busy."

Though her father was a little skeptical at the start, he's always supported her ambition to get a trade ticket. Her mom also supported her quest and can't say enough about what a positive experience it has been for Isabella. "Absolutely fantastic," said her mom, Angela Trad-

Pizarro. "It was almost too good to be true that my daughter could enrol in a program like this as part of a high school program and graduate with a career straight out of school!"

Isabella is grateful for the opportunity to take this program. She gives kudos to the Camosun instructors for their genuine support to all the students to help them succeed.

To upcoming students, she had this to say: "If you want a super rewarding career, with good income straight out of school, and steady employment, then check out the trades!"

When asked where she'd be in five years she said: "Well, I'll have my Red Seal in AST for sure, and I might even be started on my Heavy Duty Mechanic's apprenticeship. Double Red Seal baby!"

The day after interviewing Isabella I had the pleasure of connecting with Hannah Butler to check in on how she is progressing as a Professional Cook.

"Well, to be honest, engineering is still just a back-up plan," offered Hannah with a cheeky smile. An Honour Roll Student every year since grade six, and extremely strong in the sciences, Hannah was always encouraged by

her teachers to explore engineering or the sciences as a possible educational pathway. "I'm fascinated by the 'science of cooking' – all the chemical reactions and transformations that take place as a result of combining various ingredients and the application of heat."

"My mom is an amazing cook and I suppose that was part of my inspiration. I also recognized in myself that I can't sit still. I love active learning and learn best through kinesthetic activities rather than someone lecturing to me."

One teacher who did support Hannah's desire to become a Professional Cook was Monika Gysler. Monika teaches Saanich's District Culinary

Program in partnership with Camosun College through a unique pairing where the bulk of the theoretical content is delivered via an on-line model referred to as

"E-pprentice" training.

The hands-on technical skill development takes place in the teaching kitchen at Stelly's Secondary. Hannah had the academic prowess and determination to be highly successful with the online learning component of this program.

An additional pairing integral

to this delivery model is for students to engage in work-based training in industry. Hannah secured a job at Cactus Club where she still works but admits she was "wildly naïve" at the start. She soon took to it like a duck to water and embraced the steep learning curve as well as the hectic tempo of a fast-paced commercial kitchen. "Working at Cactus Club is great. They invest time and energy into helping me become better at my craft."

Hannah has made the most of the various financial incentives available to youth apprentices. She took full advantage of free tuition for her Level One technical training as part of her high school program and has since capitalized on several grants and awards at various stages of her training. "I was able to buy my first two cars with the grant money I've received." She graduated in 2016 and she will be finished all her technical training and have her Red Seal by this summer, when she will be eligible for yet another \$2,000 Apprenticeship Completion grant. (Yes, the trades pay in more ways than one.)

Hannah's success is due in large part to her commitment and work ethic. "It takes stamina to excel in this occupation," she said. "It's not for the faint of heart." She regularly logs over 90 hours in a two-week pay period and is known for her ability to pull off back-to-back shifts if the restaurant is short staffed. "It's easy to work hard when you're following your passion!" She is grateful for the support and encouragement she received from her parents to do exactly that. To other students contemplating their future she had this to say: "Don't listen to your teachers; follow your passion, and make it your own amazing career!"

Without a doubt, Isabella McHenry and Hannah Butler are certainly both amazing young "Woman to Watch" in our community!

Contact Stu Rhodes for more information on how to get involved as a student apprentice, or as an employer sponsor in this, or any other career program in Saanich School District. 250-415-9211.

View the promotional YouTube video, "Jump Start Your Career" at <http://www.youtube.com/user/saanichcareers>

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