

## Crews@Work is producing results in Victoria BC.



In order to meet the needs of people living with the effects of a brain injury, who are unable to sustain independent employment, The Cridge Centre for the Family has partnered with Lynne Mann to bring the Crews@Work part-time supported work option to Victoria BC. With the recognition that many people with brain injuries need ongoing support to be successful we have created an ideal employer, implemented a disability specific training course at Camosun College and developed community allies to ensure a support network for the participants. Eleven students graduated from our first training in October 2006, all were hired and all are still employed. A second training starts in February and we expect to run another later this year.

One semester of training is offered at Camosun College and is designed specifically for people with brain injuries. Students participate in campus life, are assured of a high quality learning experience and have access to disability support. After graduating from Camosun, students are ready to work in a supported part time setting.

Social enterprise is a movement that is committed to providing social benefit in the course of doing business. There are two bottom lines, a financial one and a social one. Working with Crews@Work allies, Miriam Byrne, a local entrepreneur and business leader, has created a social enterprise designed to be an ideal employer for workers with brain injuries. Miriam is able to structure the work setting by developing contracts that suit the abilities of the workers and to provide ongoing job support by training supervisors with the specific support needs of her workers. Ms. Byrne is committed to providing the social benefits of work, reduced poverty and increased social belonging for those living with the effects of a brain injury.

The program has benefits reaching far beyond employment. Social determinants of health link vocation with health and quality of life. The World Health Organization lists the following social determinants of health: the social gradient, early life, social exclusion, unemployment, stress, social support, addictions, work, food and transportation (The Solid Facts. World Health Organization. 1998). Except for early life, Crews@Work directly addresses all of these determinants. Becoming a wage earner elevates a person's income and their position on the social gradient. Meaningful engagement with disabled and non-disabled peers at college and in the work place improves social inclusion. Work, employment, and social support are provided and participants are supported to access help to address lifestyle needs such as addictions, diet, transportation, healthcare and housing.

In order to ensure a complete support network for the participants, Crews@Work fosters relationships and alliances. Participants gain experience and confidence supporting their peers, involving the important people in their lives and expanding their support networks. Lynne Mann provides the program model, training materials and her mentorship. Camosun College provides training. Miriam's social enterprise provides ongoing supported employment. Vocational supports, social workers, service coordinators and case managers ensure that participants are appropriately placed and monitored. The Cridge Centre for the Family provides program coordination, management and leadership. Together, we are creating outcomes that delight everyone.

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