

STUDENT LINKS

Community Living Ontario

Connecting a student's passion and interest with an expert.

Student Links is funded by the Ministry of Community and Social Services



“ People who have expertise just love to share it. That’s human nature. ”
David Baldacci

Road to new skills and friendship



John Scheulderman is on the road to fulfilling his passion for classic cars through Community Living Ontario's Student Links initiative.

The 20-year-old student from Napanee is sharing that journey with his mentor, David Cox, a retired auto body worker, car insurance appraiser and classic car enthusiast, who lives in Kingston.

Since last spring, the two have been restoring a 1931 Ford Model A Coupe, which David has been working on in his garage for roughly 20 years.

While learning practical skills such as installing a modern suspension and working on the engine, John and David have bonded over their enthusiasm for "all things car" and are enjoying each other's company.

"He enjoys helping out and being hands on rather than just watching," says Cox.

"I enjoy showing him and seeing what he gets out of

the experience. What I tell him about the car he can take with him throughout his life. I'm sure this will help him in the future. It's neat to help him out."

For John, the experience is building on existing knowledge he's gained through his high school co-op at a local car dealership, where he performs tasks such as oil changes and tire rotations.

"I know a lot about cars and David is a fun guy to work with. We listen and talk to each other about different things."

John's hope for the future is to work on cars, especially his beloved 1984 Mustang. He's already asked David to help him with a new paint job, some interior work, and to install a new convertible roof.

John's dad, John Sr., says discovering Student Links through his son's high school has given John Jr. "an opportunity to be out there and to experience the world from another person's perspective, which is always a good thing. It's also good, practical experience. He's developing skills that he can use in a work environment."

John Sr. says his son has flourished in his relationship with David, because he is a "really good fit. He's patient, has a calm presence and helps John understand why you do what you do."

As for John Jr. and David, their journey continues. They hope to have the Model A Coupe fully restored by 2017, and then they'll be hitting the road.

Viv Snead, Community Living Ontario

Alex's interests in horticulture studies continue to grow

Three years ago, Alex Warner and Adrien Gallant were introduced through the Student Links initiative. Since then they have developed a strong bond and are excited about the future for Alex.

A love for horticulture brought them together. Alex has a passion for nature and plants, and Adrien is a horticulturalist.

Alex, now 20, says, "I enjoy all natural things out there. I would rather be in a forest than in a city."

When they first met, the Cambridge resident says "we looked at nutrients and basic components that make up a plant and what it requires to survive. We were also talking about how other factors have an effect on plants."

Many of their talks have been based on lessons that Adrien would plan, and he was surprised to see Alex carrying a textbook at their first meeting – a textbook that Adrien had used in his second year of university studies.

"He is a very keen individual," says Adrien, who is not only a mentor, but also a friend. He and Alex live within a 15-minute walk of one another.

Now, their regular conversations at a local coffee shop encompass a broader range of subjects, including a shared interest in ancient history, especially Chinese, American and Canadian history.

Another recent experience saw them researching seeds from prehistoric pine trees in Australia after Adrien saw an article in National Geographic. He ordered some online and Alex was excited to add them to his collection.

"I have them in an airtight container and they are nicely preserved," says Warner. It's unlikely they will be planted though, because their germination rate is so low, he explains. "It is actually about a 50 per cent [chance that germination will take place], but that is only under perfect conditions."

Their friendship has helped Alex crystallize his



educational goals too.

He is upgrading his math skills so he can enter the two-year Biotechnology Technician program at Conestoga College.

"I want to use it as a bridge to get into a more ecological program" and his ultimate goal is a PhD.

Francine Warner, Alex's Mom, says her son has "learned a lot from Adrien. He learns and incorporates it."

"I am not so sure Alex would have looked at college like he does now, with upgrading his math skills, if it wasn't for what he has learned from Adrien. It has given him a pathway to college."

Francine adds their friendship also provides Alex with a social outlet, which is "very good for him. If it weren't for the initiative, he would not have had the opportunity to meet Alex."

As their relationship continues to grow, Adrien says he is "very interested in seeing Alex's development. I think we have a lot of things in common."

As for Alex, his daily math studies are another step toward his goal of studying at Conestoga, a seed that was planted through the Student Links initiative.

Viv Snead, Community Living Ontario

Are you a high school student? **Connect with us!**

Let Student Links introduce you to interesting people who are doing work that appeals to your interests. Get inspired to imagine your own possibilities!

For more information contact Joel MacIntyre at: jmacintyre@communitylivingontario.ca or Linda White at: lwhite@communitylivingontario.ca

Eligibility to participate in this initiative: Students enrolled in high school, who are 14-21 years of age and who have an intellectual disability.

Joe is recording history, one keystroke at a time

A diverse set of interests and skills is helping to create opportunities for a young adult from Kingston.

Last fall, **Joe Moore-Jeha** and his parents met with a representative from Student Links to identify some interests that he might wish to pursue.

Cooking, hospitality and landscaping were some of the initial ideas that were identified as possible options. However, Joe possesses strong computer and typing skills, along with the ability to quickly recall names and events. He also enjoys the arts and interacting with people.

Inquiries were made about the 18-year-old possibly meeting with a court stenographer or pursuing another opportunity where his skills could be applied and further developed.

Soon after, a connection was made with the city Clerk's Department in Kingston. The office is tasked with transcribing what transpires at all meetings, including committee and council meetings.

In October of 2015, Joe was introduced to Catalina Blumenberg, who is a Committee Clerk for the city. Her role is to prepare the agendas and minutes for the various committees.

Catalina recalls Joe was well prepared for their initial meeting, bringing his resume with him and discussing the skills he wanted to develop. Because of his interest in the arts, Joe was asked to record the minutes for the Arts Advisory Committee.

"She brings me a laptop computer. I type up whatever they say and I get most of it captured," says the student from Kingston Collegiate and Vocational Institute.

"What I've started to do is type up the name of the person who's speaking and what they're saying, almost like a story."

Following the meetings, Joe and Catalina reconvene a few days later to review and combine their notes, which are then part of the official record.

When they first started, Joe's minutes were roughly 10 pages in length and included few identifiers. Since then, Catalina says he's become a pro at recording the committee's minutes. They're now working on developing additional skills, including the recognition of motions that are put forward during meetings.

"For me, it's been super rewarding," says Blumenberg. "He's been a big help for us within the City Clerks Department."

They're currently exploring opportunities where Joe could record public meetings when there is no clerical



support provided and be paid for his contributions, possibly as early as this summer.

Catalina says she's happy that Student Links exists, because she thinks it's rewarding for both the participant and the mentor.

"It's become so much more than I ever thought it would. At first, we just wanted to see if Joe would like it. It was two meetings initially, and now he's really committed to it."

Joe's mother, Christine Salvail, says Student Links has provided her son with something that he wouldn't have had otherwise.

"I think it's motivated him and shown him that there are other opportunities out there."

His parents say their son also wants to be a positive influence on other people who have autism and to show them what's possible, including a political career.

Joe recently revealed that he would like to run for city council one day.

"I would like to attend public meetings, help the community and get to know people very well."

Ron Laroche, Community Living Ontario

Sharon is creating her own recipe for success

Sharon Rehel and Lindsay Gagnon are discovering the art of cooking and creating delicious dishes together, along with a friendship.

They met as a result of a shared passion for cooking and were introduced through Community Living Ontario's Student Links Initiative.

Lindsay showed Sharon many of her baking and cooking secrets. Since then, their regular get-togethers have resulted in the pair making an assortment of classic comfort foods, including chicken wings, one of Sharon's favourites. Often, they will eat the dishes right away, but as any good cook knows sharing is welcomed by family, friends and classmates, and Sharon is happy to oblige.

The 15-year-old, who attends Roland Michener Secondary School in South Porcupine, says, "I really like it, and I really enjoy it, the baking and cooking with Lindsay."

"We also talk about school and all kinds of stuff" including boys, clothes and Lindsay's fall wedding.

Sharon's mom, Eva, says her daughter has "learned so much from Lindsay, not just baking but life lessons too. She really looks forward to seeing her."

For Lindsay, the opportunity to meet someone who shares her passion and it has become a real partnership. Together, they decide what they will make, she gets the ingredients, picks up Sharon from her home and they then head to Lindsay's kitchen in Timmins.

"We read what is needed, she continues mixing, and we'll work together, put it in the oven and we have a delicious treat within an hour's time."

More than food is being created when they come together.

"It's a great bond we have made and it's a great friendship that we are building. We talk about Sharon's school, who she likes there, the food we are making and how we can make it healthier, and my wedding dress and bridesmaid dresses."

"I feel Sharon is having more than a typical mentorship,



because beyond developing skills we've also shared a lot just about life in general."

As for Sharon, she's looking forward to the next time she and Lindsay meet, when cheesecake will be on the menu. In terms of the future, she's been inspired – she hopes to work in a restaurant as a chef or a baker.

Viv Snead, Community Living Ontario



www.facebook.com/communitylivingontario