

STUDENT LINKS

Community Living Ontario

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

Alex takes record manufacturing, design for a spin



Like his musical tastes, Alex Gall's interests are varied.

He enjoys kayaking, canoeing and sailing at the family cottage in Quebec during the summer months, and he pursues mixed martial arts and skiing when the weather turns colder.

The 17-year-old student, who attends the YMCA Academy in Toronto, is also actively involved in drama and visual arts, and he has a profound interest in music. Pop, electronic dance music and indie are his favourite music genres.

Alex became connected with Student Links earlier this year to see whether a mentorship opportunity could assist him to further pursue some of his interests.

Because he has a passion for music and the arts, Alex was connected with Precision Record Pressing. The company manufactures vinyl records for independent and major labels. It's the only facility of its kind in Ontario, and one of only two in all of Canada.

Alex met with Paul Miller, Vice President of Sales, and Melanie St. Pierre, the Art Director. During the initial visit, Paul and Melanie

toured him through their facility in Toronto's west end. The various departments include sales, printing, art direction and graphic design.

It was clear to Paul and Melanie then that Alex was an ambitious young man who had a passion for music.

"We thought this was a good opportunity to merge that interest with behind-the-scenes know how, so that he could get firsthand experience into how the music he likes is made. In introducing him to this environment, it was an exciting chance to open him up to a new world," says Miller.

As part of the tour, Alex was also shown a machine from the 1970s that manufactures the company's record jackets, which led to a discovery.

"We were showing him that machine and other machines, and he seemed interested but then almost on the spot we uncovered his real interest in the graphic design around the printed artwork," says Miller.

The record jackets, inserts and centre labels created by Precision Record Pressing are printed in-house. Melanie says Alex was really interested in the design work, so she gave him a tutorial on how to use design software and its various tools. Then, they engaged in an exercise where he came up with a band name and designed his own artwork.

"The band was called Andor and the title was called Blue, because I really like the colour blue," says Gall.

"I created the band name and what it was for, which was electronic and indie music. Then, we created the record label for it."

They designed the labels during his Alex's first visit and came up with a concept for the record jacket during a subsequent visit.

Paul says the exercise seemed to motivate Alex to explore what else is possible in the field of music production.

"He was so pulled in by it and riveted that he didn't want to leave. And even watching all the other machines in action, [they] held no candle to designing these elements."

Alex says he came away from the experience wanting to explore further opportunities related to graphic design.

For Paul, it was a pleasure to show Alex one of the many opportunities within the music industry.

"All you need to do is overturn the first rock to open up a world where, suddenly, something that you were interested in can become a career or an avenue to explore other interests."

Ron Laroche, Community Living Ontario

Jumping into the **comic book world**



Mark Rowe looks forward to the end of the week for a different reason than most people.

That's because he's been helping out at Jump City in Timmins every Friday afternoon. The comic book store is owned by sisters Julie Sheldon and Katherine Montigny, who have been mentoring Mark since December of 2015.

The 17-year-old, who attends Timmins High and Vocational School, is devoted to creating two comic book series, World Hop and Chaos Ensues, which can be found at www.thecomicsseries.com (<http://worldhop.webcomic.ws/> and <http://chaosensues.webcomic.ws/>)

This past summer was a busy one for Mark. "I've just finished inking some comics and will be posting them on one of my sites. I've also been writing a book, doing a lot of drawing, writing, working on a water colour commission and trying to make a video game. I'm just trying to be a jack-of-all-trades because I don't trust anyone else," he laughs.

At Jump City, Mark assists with preparing comic book sleeves and sorting comics, as well as taking part in choosing and ordering stock for the store. He also helps with inventory and he answers phone inquiries.

Julie says Mark has been a great asset to the store, and she and her sister assist him with his passion for creating comics.

"He brings his work to show us. His comics don't need much polishing. We read through some ideas, but he is a great creative source himself. We give him feedback about a character's expression or where the story is going. He picks our brain, occasionally."

Mark has been drawing and writing since his early teens, encouraged in his writing by an English teacher and in his drawing by creating comics for friends.

These were just "warm-ups" for the artist who began sketching nature, but "wanted to expand my repertoire to include drawing

people. I chose fantasy and sci-fi comics because it allows me to expand on the world and allows me to get out all my ideas, jokes, and thoughts for certain scenes."

So far, he's posted 18 pages for Chaos Ensues and five for World Hop.

"Each post contributes to an ongoing story, like you would have in a novel. It takes a long time to get there. I'm a one-man crew, planning the panels, sketching it all in, inking it all, scanning it, putting in the words and writing and choosing an appropriate time when I can post it so more viewers will see it."

Through his mentorship, Mark notes he is growing as is his craft.

"I feel more motivated when I'm at the store to work on my comics, I'm doing it faster and learning about the trade. I have also come out of my shell a bit."

His mom, Molly, agrees, adding that the experience "has been really great for Mark. He looks forward to going to the store on Fridays."

And what does the future hold for this comic book creator?

"I'm looking forward to going to college or university, where I can learn how to improve my work and maybe even find people I could collaborate with, rely on, and share my ideas."

Viv Snead, Community Living Ontario



Kaitlynn's All **Fired Up** for College



Kaitlynn Lappan began to share her talents with the broader community last year after her Student Link's mentor introduced her to a world of opportunities. The 21-year-old has just finished high school with many interests and talents, including horseback riding, biking, sketching and jewellery making.

Last November, Kaitlynn was introduced to Rebecca Geoffrey, a self-taught jewelry maker for the past 10 years, who also sells her work in galleries in Ontario and across the country. Geoffrey runs her business out of her studio in Kingston, where she creates, designs, and fabricates her work.

Geoffrey says she was motivated to learn more about Student Links after another artist friend shared her experience with her. "Kaitlynn is an accomplished artist and I have learned as much from Kaitlynn as she has learned from me" says Geoffrey.

Meeting once or twice a week for three to four hours at a time,



Rebecca and Kaitlynn became friends. Kaitlynn says, "Art relaxes me, when the world is stressful around me. I learned a lot from Rebecca, making bracelets, necklaces, and how to burn glass onto metal for earrings, which is really cool."

Rebecca explains that she took her cue from Kaitlynn each time they met, in terms of what she might like to start working on and she recalls her amazing drawings of horses. Kaitlynn also happens to be an accomplished rider, currently training for para dressage in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Kaitlynn is stretching herself to learn new things: metal etching, forging and soldering. Rebecca says, "She is an incredible young lady and it was always about what new things we can do each day. Sometimes, we finish up our time together with lunch out and some good conversation."

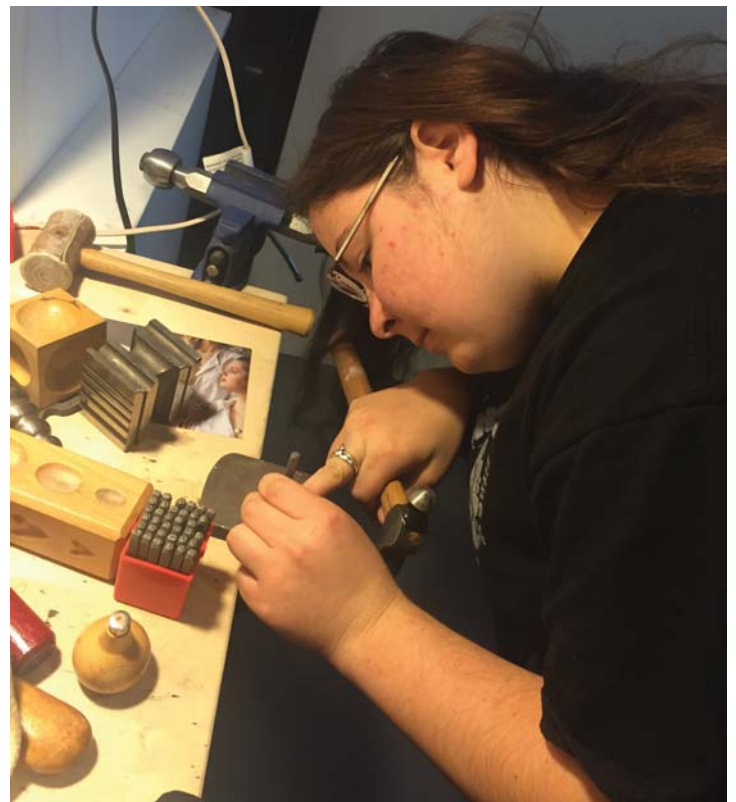
As art comes naturally to Kaitlynn, and as she and Rebecca came to spend more time sharing their common interests and passions, Kaitlynn noticed that other vendors were selling their wares and she thought she could too. Rebecca introduced Kaitlynn to making multiple runs and casting her jewelry to make more pieces at a time for commercialization purposes.

During their time together, Rebecca unknowingly encouraged Kaitlynn to take the next big step in her life, as she enrolled in a three-year Graphic Design program at St. Lawrence College. Kaitlynn's passion continues to grow and she says, "I am excited to learn different styles of art, the mechanics of sketching and how to use computers, which will be new."

Kaitlynn's mom says, "Rebecca has encouraged her to go out and show her jewelry and encouraged her to explore what else might be possible."

A whole world of possibilities has opened up to Kaitlynn and she is taking full advantage and forging ahead.

Heather Evans, Community Living Ontario



Building a future **by design**



Shazad Atcha believes an Apple a day may lead to a career in industrial design.

The 18-year-old student's creative spark is focused on developing app ideas inspired by the iconic company.

"It was really cool to see him come up with different ideas," says Angela Cheng, his Student Links mentor since May of last year. She is in her third year of Industrial Design at the Ontario College of Art and Design and found out about the initiative through researching volunteer opportunities online.

She points to his most recent ideas of an income app and one that shows if there are any problems with a person's mobile phone.

"I was giving him some feedback and critique on his work. Sometimes, I find myself learning a lot more from him because he knows so much about Apple products and different cool apps. It's not just me teaching him but him teaching me."

Shazad, who is the creator of the blog Republic of Apple - A Blog About All Things Apple (www.republicofapple.com) and a student at Danforth Collegiate and Technical Institute in Toronto, heard about Student Links at his school.

His first connection was with Mike Doell, a designer who has his own firm and worked at a design lab at the University of Toronto. After they had spent some time together, Shazad was introduced to Angela.

"She knows a lot about technology," he says. "She's helped me with processes for designing things." He also credits her with "getting me to practice drawing, which was my weak spot."

Shazad decided to concentrate on User Experience Design for apps.

"My idea is to design a new user experience when making an app, from the aesthetics to what the buttons do and say. We didn't actually make the app, instead we used Photoshop and pixel meter [to develop the concept]."

"The point of the exercise was not to launch a real app, because you know you have to code," Angela notes. "It was more to help him to understand, 'I'm designing a general flow, and how can we think through this process of making an app function.'"

Drawing is also important to "concept ideation", she says, "because through sketch, we can make different prototypes so people can see what we are doing, literally making that knowledge more tangible because it is visual."

Shazad also appreciates other aspects of spending time and working with Angela. "It gave me some background on what goes on in the field, so I can make an informed decision about college or university. And I can put together a portfolio for that."

For Angela, she enjoys "how we help each other. Shazad doesn't talk much but when we talk about technology, he opens up a lot."

They are now exploring what he might like to do next, which could possibly include interactive design. Over the summer, Shazad worked at Toronto Pearson International's iStore as a sales associate, explaining Apple products to customers and sharing his passion for technological devices with a different audience.

Whatever he decides, it's clear Shazad has already begun building a design for his future.

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.



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