

Best Practices  
Best Practices

**Best Practices**

**OAYEC**



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# Best Practices

## The Ontario Association of Youth Employment Centres (OAYEC)

OAYEC is a non-profit charitable organization that supports and advocates on behalf of youth employment services in Ontario. It represents a province-wide network of 60 youth employment agencies and colleges that provide employment preparation and placement services to summer students and out of school youth. OAYEC publishes a regular bulletin as one of its member services.

This document is available online at:  
[www.interlog.com/~oayec](http://www.interlog.com/~oayec)

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### Why document best practices?

- It creates a tool for information sharing
- It can assist in effective decision making and the efficient use of resources
- It supports program development
- It promotes awareness of the excellent work done in the youth employment field



# Best Practices

## Letter from the Executive Director

This special issue is devoted to the topic of “best practices”.

It brings together experiences from 6 different member organizations to highlight and share the excellent work going on across our network.

Since we are all in the same business of youth employment there is an opportunity to take the lessons learned by others and apply them to our own programs. We know from discussions at our conference last fall that there are many other examples of best practices out there.

Not all ideas will work in all situations. Local conditions may dictate a different approach. If any of the following stories help you do what you already do in a better way, then this special issue will have proven its worth.

The material for this issue came from the front line of youth employment services. In January 2001, we put out a call to our membership for program information. The material you sent encompassed the full range of program design and delivery from guiding principles to case management tools. Thanks to everyone who took the time to put their experiences into writing. For those of you who still have a story to tell, our “best practices” file is open for additional material for a follow-up issue.



Kay Eastham  
Executive Director, OAYEC

**Essentially benchmarking [best practices] means looking for the companies that are doing something best and learning how they did it in order to emulate them.**

**The aim is to do what we already do, only do it better.**

---

*Michael Hammer and  
James Champy,  
Reengineering the Corporation,  
1993, Harper*





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# Best Practices

## Guiding Principles

GREAT, Grand River Employment and Training, Six Nations of the Grand River

Stephanie Styres describes 9 principles that she has found First Nations youth are looking for when dealing with GREAT staff and people in general. These principles have application in any program. Stephanie tells us the 9 principles are free and there is no secret financial cost. She points out, however, that spiritually they are very challenging.

1. The first principle is *love*. First Nations youth want to know that we care about them and that we truly and wholeheartedly want to see them succeed. They don't want us to do everything for them but they want us to empower them to do it for themselves. They want to know that we believe in them.
2. The second principle is the reservoir for happiness which is *joy*. They want us to be optimistic and find the good in all situations. They want us to be happy for them when they succeed, and when they fail, encourage them to try again.
3. The third principle is *peace*. Be at peace with yourself and others. They don't want to hear about our problems or over hear what a terrible job someone is doing. They want to hear people building each other up and helping each other. We are role models every minute of the day whether we like it or not.
4. The fourth principle is *patience*. The First Nations youth want us to be patient with them and work at their pace. Yes, maybe it does only take two weeks to find a job but when you're not feeling good about yourself, it will take longer. They want us to build them up and encourage them as they work towards building their dream, not as our statistics but for their gratifying and dignified self sustaining way of life.

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---

*Stephanie Styres,  
GREAT, Grand River Employment  
and Training, Six Nations of the  
Grand River*

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When a group meets for several days or weeks, try developing a list of rewards for good attendance.

Stephanie Styres,  
GREAT, Grand River Employment  
and Training, Six Nations of the  
Grand River

5. The fifth principle is *kindness*. The First Nations youth want to be treated with respect and that means people must be kind. Kindness is a heart issue and if you are not kind from the inside then kindness cannot be manifested on the outside. Being kind means always using words that build up an individual and avoiding words that tear down an individual. Spoken words can be a poison or edifying to the spirit. Words can never be taken back and the damage that we can do will scar that individual forever.
6. The sixth principle is *goodness*. This means that we need to be good to youth by giving them the best service that we can. We need to explain all their options, investigate pros and cons but recognize that ultimately it is their decision as to what they will do next. We need to be focusing on the positive and minimizing the negative; their responsibility, their decision and the future.
7. The seventh principle is *faithfulness*. We need to be faithful in our service to First Nations youth. They have been let down too many times in the past and it is our responsibility to build that trust relationship and become what we speak. If we make a promise, then we need to live up to our word. Too many promises have been broken in their lives and they want a counsellor that they can count on.
8. The eighth principle is *gentleness*. First Nations youth want us to be gentle with their feelings and also with their approach to life in general. It has taken a long time to get to where they are and it will take a long time to get out of where they are. They want us to move at their pace, encourage each step whether big or small. Not to focus on failures but to emphasize successes and build on them. We have reinforced their failures for too long and now we have to redirect our energy to reinforcing the positive no matter how great or small.

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9. The ninth principle is *self-control*. First Nations youth want to be reassured that we have it all together and that we are able to handle situations when faced with adversity. We are their role model and they want to know that when the pressure is on we still approach life in the same manner but our strategy changes. We hold fast to who we are and we do not lose sight of our spirit and react in an inappropriate manner. We are role models whether we like it or not. There will always be someone watching us whether they are in front of us, beside us or behind us. Our approach to life can be an encouragement to success or a catalyst to failure. Ultimately, we need to decide what mark we are going to leave on humanity.

For more information please contact Stephanie Styres, Youth Services Manager, Grand River Employment Centre at (519) 445-2222 or E-mail [sjsgreat@worldchat.com](mailto:sjsgreat@worldchat.com).

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*Stephanie Styres,  
GREAT, Grand River Employment  
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# Best Practices

## Program Design

GREAT, Grand River Employment and Training, Six Nations of the Grand River

Stephanie Styres offers some best practices in program design for culturally relevant programs that empower young people to take responsibility for the future of their community.

- Youth Employment Strategy should include a *description of the target group* that we are focusing on, the number of youth we are targeting, and the result we are trying to achieve. The results should be measurable and relevant to what we as a community determine is a successful outcome. The youth programming should follow the same procedures as regular programming while adhering to the accountability procedures that have been established.
- A *holistic approach* to youth programming is of utmost importance as most of the youth we are serving are still searching for who they are and who they want to be. In their search for their gift and their uniqueness, we must not focus on who they are now at this moment but we must see them and treat them as who they could be. As one person said so eloquently, “Treat me as I am and that’s just where I will stay. Treat me as if I were what I could be and that’s what I’ll become.”
- *Freedom of choice* is also a very important ingredient when dealing respectfully with our youth. Our youth want to be respected for who they are, what they believe and what they decide is important for them. Some are interested in traditional teachings and pursuing their identity in the ways of the Hadenosaune culture, however some are very reluctant to participate. The freedom of choice and the respect for the individual’s decision, in regards to their life, is crucial if we want to see our youth flourish in our community.

**...most of the youth we are serving are still searching for who they are and who they want to be.**

---

Stephanie Styres,  
GREAT, Grand River Employment  
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- *Ownership of the program* is very important when dealing with youth. They want to formulate options by utilizing community services but ultimately they want to be the owner or the one who makes the final decision. When dealing with Youth Community Based Projects, youth want to be a part of designing the project and have input in the finished product. The self-esteem of our youth is enhanced when they take ownership of what they produce, their contribution and the impact on the community.
- *Spirituality* is also a big part of the youth and their search for wholeness. They are searching for what is right for them, what defines them as a person and the steps necessary to make their purpose a reality. Youth are aware that they are spiritual beings and that there is a creator but they want to establish their own relationship with the creator by investigating and seeking information for themselves. They want us to be the guides and provide information when we are asked, but ultimately they want to decide what is right for them.
- *Client centred* approach is very important when dealing with our youth. The client centred approach takes into consideration the uniqueness of the individual as well as the uniqueness of their situation. This approach empowers our youth to share their goals, in a non-intrusive atmosphere which provides the stepping stone to solidifying our working relationship.
- *Life skills and self-awareness* have proved to be two important factors when dealing with our youth. Life skills provides the foundation for living in day to day situations, both negative and positive. It is a tool kit with a lifetime guarantee that enhances the quality of life for all our families. This tool kit is free in the monetary sense however in the spiritual sense there is a cost for implementing, utilizing and updating the information provided in the life skills tool kit. Self awareness is an ongoing journey which our youth are sometimes hesitant to begin because of the painful areas that need to be worked through. During this time we need to be very supportive, encouraging and respectful of their needs and committed to our role as a community helper.

For more information please contact Stephanie Styres, Youth Services Manager, Grand River Employment Centre at (519) 445-2222 or E-mail [sjsgreat@worldchat.com](mailto:sjsgreat@worldchat.com).

# Best Practices

## Workshop Delivery

YMCA, Owen Sound and Hanover area.

Marie Krauter offers suggestions on how to make workshops work. Marie has both experienced participants who want to come back for more and those that despair at the thought of another session. So the challenge is how to keep them coming back...

### 1. Look alive and act alive

The workshop leader should look as if you are just about to have the best day of your life, especially because of these participants. The workshop leader has to be the *entertainer*, the person with the dance and the song. The dance to get their attention and the song to keep it. While the material is central to the purpose of the workshop, you have to ensure that the message gets across. Standing and talking like a pre-programmed robot will not work. If you don't have their attention through your actions, the participants will never hear the words. If you capture them early, you will have them for the rest of the workshop.

### 2. Establish guidelines for safety and order of conduct

In the initial stages of building a group, let the participants establish the guidelines that will ensure safety and an order of conduct. The workshop leader can offer suggestions if the group is struggling or seems to have missed some key things that could become an issue later. Encourage the group to comment on whether these points should be included or not. Once the guidelines are complete, ask the group to come up with consequences, if a group member deviates from the guidelines. In this way the group has ownership for how it operates.

If  
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of the workshop.

Marie Krauter, YMCA,  
Owen Sound and Hanover area

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### 3. Identify a reward

When a group meets for several days or weeks, try developing a list of rewards for good attendance. Let the participants suggest the rewards. Having the leader pick the rewards does not motivate youth participants. There will be a complete change in attitude when participants can look forward to having their name put in a draw and choosing something they would like from a list they developed. The sample basket of rewards has included movie passes for two, and gift certificates from Canadian Tire (for tools), from grocery stores (for food) and from department stores (for household items). Local businesses can be approached for donations.

### 4. Encourage ownership of ideas

As ideas and information are put on flipcharts, hang them up on the walls so that the room becomes their room. You will find that the lessons discussed can be more readily recalled. The participants develop a sense of ownership for the statements that they make. You can see this happening when they start quoting from their thoughts and the things that they said they could do as recorded on the flipcharts.

### 5. Redirect negative comments

There are always those that despite all your good intentions and careful planning do not want to make the group work. Often they are not shy about telling you or others that it is not working. Instead of getting consumed in negative comments, turn it around to make it work for you. Ask the complainers to rate on a scale of 1 to 10 their enjoyment in the group. Most of them feel good about telling you that the group is terrible and will give it a 1 or sometimes even go off the scale and give it a 0. Chart that response on a scale of 1 to 10 and then ask them what it would take to get the group to be  $\frac{1}{2}$  point better for them - from a 1 to  $1\frac{1}{2}$ .

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You are in effect asking your critics what *they need to do* to make the group a little better. They are then on the spot of offering you, the leader, some suggestions. In the end, the ownership of the group goes back to them and for some, this is the first time they have experienced their opinion being asked and listened and responded to. The chances are they feel better about themselves and they will make

Marie Krauter, YMCA,  
Owen Sound and Hanover area

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a commitment back to you to try to make it work. If they feel better about themselves, they will be a better participant, more positive and will likely listen to the message better - all because they can see they have ownership in the working of the group.

## 6. Your attitude!

The most important aspect of all is *ATTITUDE!!!* Whether the workshop makes it or breaks it, is for the most part up to you. You must want to be there. You must want to help the participants learn something new and be open to learn from them. The people in the group are usually so interesting and have a story to tell if you let them say it. It is important that you have a message to give, but it is just as important that you respond to the participants and let them talk if they have something to share. Try real hard not to shut the participants down. Do not respond to their stories by telling a better story. One-upping is very defeating. The youth participants will believe you are the one with a life and their life doesn't count - so why share any further.

The people in the group are usually so interesting and have a story to tell if you let them say it.

Marie concludes with these words of wisdom about teaching workshops.

*"How to make workshops work is as complex as the individual personalities that come to a group. Workshops are not easy and even after years of doing them they still are not easy. They all seem to take a life of their own, but that's because you are dealing with individual life histories in each group. It is an ongoing process of learning and emotions. Some groups put you on top of the world and others in the pit of the earth. But if you have given your best, in the midst of sarcasm and compliments, you and the group will know it and be the better for it."*

For more information please contact Marie Krauter, YMCA Community and Employment Services, at (519) 364-3163 or E-mail [mkrauter@ymcaowensound.on.ca](mailto:mkrauter@ymcaowensound.on.ca).

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Marie Krauter, YMCA,  
Owen Sound and Hanover area



# Best Practices

## Targeting Key Industries

JobStart, Toronto

Heather Sant points out that in the current age of “high tech” there are interesting and challenging jobs for young people aged 18 to 24 in key industries such as the auto body industry which is always recruiting and having a great deal of difficulty finding workers.

JobStart has co-ordinated the Generic Industrial Skills Training Program for almost 10 years. Currently an enhanced component of the Job Connect program, it is designed to help give youth with barriers to employment the chance to receive skills training and prepare to meet the expectations of today’s employers.

The Program offers basic core skills that are generic to a variety of industrial and trade occupations and include:

- Shop Safety
- Use of hand and power tools
- Metal cutting, forming, machining
- Welding with oxy-acetylene & MIG
- Repair auto surface & rust damage
- Repair impact damage
- Sand, prime & prepare finish painting
- Car detailing
- Mechanical reasoning
- Inventory control

Clients receive intensive training in Occupational Health and Safety, Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) and instruction in basic First Aid and CPR.

A literacy instructor from the Toronto District School Board provides training to the participants to help prepare them for writing the GED in readiness for apprenticeship. Clients are assessed and then offered the required literacy upgrading in the areas of verbal presentation, reading, grammar, spelling and math. Extra emphasis on specific work related vocabulary is also provided to special needs clients.

**JobStart has  
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Generic Industrial Skills  
Training Program for  
almost 10 years.**

*Heather Sant, JobStart, Toronto*

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Job Connect clients registered in this enhanced service have an opportunity to get 12 weeks of training before moving to the Job Development Placement Service (JDPS). This service, helps the participants with their job search by introducing them to potential employers. For clients conducting their own job search, JobStart continues to monitor their progress throughout.

JobStart support does not end when the participant gets a job as program staff are also available during the first few weeks of employment to help both the participant and employer solve any adjustment problems.

For more information please contact Guy VanBurkel, Job Connect Manager, JobStart at (416) 253-2706.



# Best Practices

## Hands On Business Experience for a Healthy Community

Youth Opportunities Unlimited (YOU), London

Steve Cordes introduces us to an innovative work experience program, Reuse It Recycling, with a commitment to the environment and a healthy community. Reuse It Recycling offers a recycling program to small and medium sized businesses tailored to suit the needs of the customer. Its Construction Taxi service provides waste and debris removal from construction and home improvement sites. Any materials that can be re-used are donated to Habitat for Humanity or used by Reuse It's Product Development department.

Reuse It provides two types of work experience placements to youth; contracts of six months to a year in the *Job Creation Partnership*, or short-term workplace trials in the *Community Co-op* program. Funding comes from Human Resources Development Canada, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, community donations, and program revenues. There are only three staff. The Program Co-ordinator provides overall leadership to Reuse It and leads the sales team. A Training Consultant provides direct supervision of the participants; including performance reviews, reporting to EPP Case Managers, and job development support for the graduates of the program. A Chief Product Designer leads the development of new product lines using recyclable materials and provides general leadership to the retail component of the program.

Through the *Job Creation Partnership*, ten participants per year are hired for six to twelve month contracts. These placements are geared toward those who have had some prior attachment to the labour market and who want to update or enhance particular skills.

The *Community Co-op* work trials program offers youth-at-risk their first taste of the work world. The one to four week volunteer placements allow participants to build transferable skills, enhance their resume, and earn a work reference. Many youth in the co-op program are Employment Planning and Preparation (EPP) clients who may be headed into Job Development Placement Services (JDPS).

**Since 1996  
Reuse It Recycling  
has provided more than  
100 youth with hands on  
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business.**

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*Steve Cordes,  
Youth Opportunities Unlimited  
(YOU), London*

# Best Practices

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Since 1996 Reuse It Recycling has provided more than 100 youth with hands on experience in a recycling service geared to small business. Program participants are responsible for carrying out all the activities associated with running a small business. These include invoicing, customer relations, retail sales, manufacturing, general labour, sales, market research, and product development. The program provides opportunities for participants to develop skills related to their own career goals and to build transferable skills in communication, teamwork, initiative, and decision making.

*The value of the program is summed up in the words of one participant: "At Reuse It I was able to gain new skills. Reuse It is an excellent program because I gained back my self confidence and self respect. I know these traits will be with me in my next employment opportunity."*

For more information please contact Steve Cordes, Youth Opportunities Unlimited at (519) 432-1112 or E-mail [steve@you.on.ca](mailto:steve@you.on.ca).

# Best Practices

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## Case Management Tools

Second Chance Employment Counselling (Wellington) Inc in Partnership with Conestoga College - Guelph and Wellington County.

Jamie Perry reports on how two organizations that serve the same shared Job Connect participants co-ordinate the provision of these services using orientation and case management models supported by electronic administrative tools.

Second Chance Employment Counselling and Conestoga College are co-located and have partnered to provide Job Connect Services in Guelph and Wellington County. Second Chance provides Employment Planning and Preparation (EPP), Information and Referral Service (IRS) and Summer Jobs Service (SJS) support. Conestoga College provides Job Development Placement Supports (JDPS). The goal is a comprehensive service that is seamless to participants.

### 1. Weekly Group Orientation

Second Chance and Conestoga College have set up a regular weekly group orientation meeting to introduce participants in the employment counselling program to job placement supports. This replaces the numerous separate meetings that used to take place for introducing and orienting participants to JDPS supports. It gives both participants and staff a fixed time frame (Wednesdays at 1:00 - 3:00 pm) for this information exchange. Staff from both programs are present at the beginning to give a more detailed overview of JDPS and how the two programs work together. Time is set aside directly after the group orientation for each client to meet with a JDPS counsellor to discuss individual job support needs and develop the JDPS portion of their action plan. The date of the orientation meeting is used as the starting date to initiate JDPS supports in the Job Connect (tracking) System (JCS). For participants who cannot come to one of the weekly group orientations, individual meetings are arranged.

# Best Practices

Staff from both programs come together to collectively discuss, plan and prioritize employment counselling and job placement supports for the most needy participants.

*Jamie Perry, Second Chance  
Employment Counselling  
(Wellington) Inc, in Partnership  
with Conestoga College - Guelph  
and Wellington County.*

## 2. Monthly Joint Case Management Meeting

Staff of Second Chance and Conestoga College have always met as needed to discuss individual shared participants. The monthly structured case management meeting ensures a systematic review of all active shared EPP / JDPS participants. All staff from both programs come together at the monthly meeting to collectively discuss, plan and prioritize employment counselling and job placement supports for the most needy participants. The primary focus is on individual cases who are waiting for placements or need additional supports while on a placement. Reporting and sharing of JCS data is done outside of the case management process. The advantage of the case management meetings is that staff in the two programs can share perspectives and pool experience to provide solutions for participants having the most difficulty in moving into the job market. An added benefit is that staff hear about the job successes of participants that they might otherwise not know about.

## 3. Electronic Data Management Tools

To support case management for shared participants, there are three electronic data management tools, one of which takes information from the Job Connect System. With the JCS, only designated JCS staff at both Second Chance and Conestoga College can input and manage data for their respective JCS systems. This ensures data integrity and relieves front line staff of additional data management responsibilities. Front line staff in both programs have only read and print access to Second Chance's JCS through a shared directory on the computer network. Used together, the electronic tools provide information on shared participants, job placement opportunities, and participant interest in specific types of job placements.

**1 Shared Active Participants Query:** this is an electronically posted monthly JCS Access query of all active shared EPP / JDPS participants who are on, or waiting for JDPS placement. The query is generated monthly and is reviewed at the monthly Case Management meeting and by program supervisors.

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- 2 **JDPS Placement Leads (Listing):** this is an electronically posted word processed listing of all current subsidized and non-subsidized JDPS placement leads that EPP staff can use in order to assist JDPS staff in connecting shared participants to placements.
- 3 **JDPS Placement Requests Roster:** this is an electronically posted updated word processed listing of requests for placements from active shared participants. The list is used by JDPS staff in Job Development.

Samples of these electronic tools are available from Second Chance for any agency that would like to try them. For more information please contact Jamie Perry, Program Co-ordinator at (519) 823-2440 or E-mail [jperry@2ndchance.on.ca](mailto:jperry@2ndchance.on.ca).

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## Program Change

Youth Employment Counselling Center, Hearst

Ricky-Ann Dagenais Dorval provides information on the enhancement of a community job placement project through program review.

### 1. The Initial Idea

In 1996, the Youth Employment Counselling Center (YECC) in Hearst was searching for a new tool in its work of preparing hard-to-serve youth for the workplace. An employment counsellor came up with the idea of a regular employer willing to train the youth. The Bicultural Enterprise was created in October 1996 through a federal government grant. Its mandate was to unite Native and Francophone youth in a work environment by having them offer firewood and old furniture refinishing services to the community. The program grew quickly and the demand for firewood became so overwhelming that furniture restoration was dropped. Soon the funding for the Bicultural Enterprise came from a variety of labour contracts including commercial snow removal, blue box recycling pick-up services, landscaping, simple construction work, and of course, the sale of firewood.

### 2. The Review Process

In 1998, YECC started to examine the long term viability of Bicultural Enterprise. They hired a business consultant to study the program and make recommendations. Among the recommendations were the following:

- Establish health and safety policies and procedures
- Establish written policy on “buying procedures” for the materials
- Modernise equipment to make firewood production more cost efficient and faster
- Buy more personal protection equipment for the young workers
- Improve working conditions of the participants
- Define a remuneration policy for the participants
- Broaden the client base
- Reduce travelling and delivery costs
- Have a portable office on site for the participants and supervisors
- Install sanitary services on site for the participants

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### 3. The Restructuring

The organization used the recommendations of the consultant to restructure the program to become more efficient and improve financial stability. The first step was to incorporate the former Bicultural Enterprise as Train-A-Youth Enterprises Inc. (TAYE), a registered non-profit organization. The name Train-A-Youth was selected to describe the revised mandate. After a long process of proposal writing and submissions TAYE received a total of \$165,000 in grants. These came from HRDC, the Trillium Foundation, FedNor, Job Connect, the Hearst Rotary Club, VolNet and la Caisse Populaire de Hearst (credit union). The grants allowed for the purchase of a portable firewood mill, hydraulic delivery trailer, safety equipment, a 15 passenger van, various power tools, an electric generator, a portable office and a computer system. The grants also funded a co-ordinator to help put together the policies and procedures of the new organization, as well as a work safety program.

### 4. The Results

Train-A-Youth Enterprises provides on-the-job training to approximately 40 hard-to-serve youth per year. Two supervisors train a maximum of 8 participants at a time. In 1999-2000, 80 % of the participants returned to school or integrated into the workplace upon completion of the program. The program is marketed as a supervised work experience for youth, at affordable and negotiable prices, using modern and secure equipment. Train-A-Youth Enterprises is a source of workers for employers in the area. It is also a tool for Job Connect, Ontario Works, Ontario Disability Support Program, probation services, school co-ops and other social services seeking employment or training opportunities for their clients. TAYE survives through numerous community-based partnerships with the forest industry and social services.

**Train-A-Youth  
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provides on-the-job  
training to approximately  
40 hard-to-serve  
youth per year.**

*Ricky-Ann Dagenais Dorval,  
Youth Employment Counselling  
Center, Hearst*

For more information please contact the Centre de Consultation des Jeunes at (705) 372-1070.