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Darilyn Oerlemans



Becoming an Apprentice

My interest in the trades started when I was a child. I would help my Dad build a car, and it was the hands-on type stuff that I really liked. Also I helped fix the plumbing in the greenhouse owned by my parents. These early experiences helped me decide that a desk job was definitely not for me.

I connected with the Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP), an Alberta Education Program.... The program's staff were always supportive and there to answer my questions. I felt that they genuinely wanted to see me succeed.

I had the grades to go to university, but my initial success and experiences with RAP gave me the confidence to stick with apprenticeship. I found that plumbing matched my personality. I've been called a perfectionist. Stuff has to be done nice and proper. I've found a trade where it is actually highly looked upon for work to be done right the first time.... Things like reading blueprints and lifting heavy pipes met my need for both mental and physical challenges.

I have never felt my job to be repetitive, as there is a large variety of piping and different types of work to be done.

In my first year at college, I competed in the Skills Alberta competition and won. My initial success led to me to enter many more Skills Alberta competitions. I represented Alberta at Skills Canada competitions. I believe that the competitions got my name out to the industry and led to many job offers and other opportunities.

Some of the Challenges

Initially, my mother wanted me to go to university. After witnessing my success in my chosen career, she is now fully supportive of my career choice. Gaining that success was not easy. Young people considering a trade should, definitely be ready to work, because chances are that employers will

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throw everything they can at you when you're first starting. Not every job given to an apprentice will be a fun job, but if you try your best at every task and not complain, then your eagerness for the job will be recognized and rewarded.

Finding an Employer

I credit Careers: the Next Generation for helping me find my first job at the age of 15. My experience in the skills competitions made it easy for me to find my second job, as employers looked highly upon that experience. However, during the recession, I needed to find another position. I searched through newspapers and jobshop.com to find opportunities, and I handed out resumes every couple weeks, quite often to the same employers. After a couple months, my persistence and eagerness paid off, when one of the employers got a large contract and needed extra help.

What Worked and What Didn't

To be successful in my trade it helps to show eagerness and enthusiasm to be there and doing whatever job that is assigned. My advice for others looking to get into a trade is to be ready and willing to get your name out there. If you stay positive, even on bad days, employers will recognize it and remember you for it.

Trade: Plumbing. Location: Lethbridge. Year of Apprenticeship: 3rd

