

ACE IT Students Stoked

Vernon, BC

“Stoked!” and “Sweet!” are just two of the expressions that Sheldon Bahris uses to describe the first portion of the CNC Woodworking program he completed at Okanagan University College during his grade 11 year at Vernon Secondary School.

The CNC (Computer Numeric Coding) Woodworking program began as a pilot project and then became an ACE IT program with the development of the joinery credential.

ACE IT stands for Accelerated Credit Enrolment in Industry Training. It is a dual credit program that enables secondary school students to get a head start on the school based, technical training part of an apprenticeship.

Sheldon is one of 13 students who has completed the first half of the CNC technician certificate and received credit for level one technical training in joinery. He and his fellow students began the second half of the VSS program this September. By graduation in June, they will have earned their Dogwood certificate, a credit towards a level one joinery credential and a CNC technical credit.

Clearly, these are students who are not afraid of hard work and are fully engaged in their secondary school program. “It feels good doing hands-on work like building stuff and working hard,” explains Sheldon. “And after grad, a buddy and I have big plans with entrepreneurial ideas.” Asked if they intend to stay and build their careers in their community of Vernon, Sheldon answered with a resounding yes. “Why not stay? Everything we need is right here.”

The enthusiasm of these VSS students comes in part from the support of the ACE IT program in School District #22 Vernon, under the direction of career coordinator Tom Williamson. “This is a really great group of students who are going to be more than ready to go into the labour market,” he says, with excitement and pride.

For Roberta Stanley, mother of ACE IT student Mandi Stanley, the program has provided much more than

an early start on her daughter’s career. “Mandi has learned life-skills that she will always use,” explains Mrs. Stanley. She watched in awe as her daughter got up every morning at 5:30 a.m. to make the trek into Kelowna and happily missed her Spring Break because she was “just so into what she was learning”.

Mandi learned about the ACE IT program from her grade 10 woodworking teacher. Both her teacher and her parents encouraged Mandi to participate because they recognized two qualities that made her a perfect candidate: talent and enthusiasm. “Woodworking is something I have always really enjoyed,” says Mandi, “and even though I was scared to make the change, it has been one of the most rewarding, exciting experiences ever. I definitely plan on continuing in this field.”

ACE IT was launched with seed funding of \$1.2 million from the Ministries of Education and Advanced Education and has so far received additional funding of \$2.3 million from the Industry Training Authority’s (ITA) budget. In the 2005/06 year, 37 school districts are projected to participate in the ACE IT program and deliver 24 industry training programs to over 1,950 BC secondary school students.

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RIGHT Students Mandi Stanley (forward) and Sheldon Bahris at their VSS woodworking shop