CPRA ACPL

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE

Success Story

Abi Sparks, front, learned a lot from her job as a recreation and event support staff for the Town of Saugeen Shores.

YEE helps youth "blossom" during summer job

ABIGAIL SPARKS WORE MANY HATS AS an event support staff for the Town of Saugeen Shores: she planned events, wrote articles, and helped create important documents that will be used by the community for years to come.

But no matter what her job was on a given day, Abigail saw each project as an opportunity to grow.

"I am really glad that that I took this job, because it gave me the chance to take on lots of projects to build my skills, meet new people, and have some great experiences," says Abigail, whose position was funded by the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association's Youth Employment Experience

TOWN OF SAUGEEN SHORES, ONTARIO

Canada

Abi Sparks, right, worked as a recreation and event support staff for the Town of Saugeen Shores.

"That mentor role is so key and important for these young individuals coming into the workplace, sometimes for the first time. I think the staff get more out of something like this . . . it just reminds us that this is really how it should be in any work environment for youth."

Shanna Reid, the town's tourism supervisor

program. This program, funded by the Government of Canada, is designed to help organizations in parks and recreation build capacity, while creating employment and skills building opportunities for youth in the sector.

In her role, Abigail joined the community's tourism department over the summer. She worked on numerous projects including visitor information and restaurant guide brochures, event newsletters and the town's visitors' guide.

"These brochures were made from scratch, from the content to the design," she says, adding that many of these documents were quite lengthy including the visitors' guide and newsletters. "There were many events depending on the month, and the newsletter could get up to three or four pages!"

She adds that the visitors' guide was a team effort, and was created to encourage people to visit Saugeen Shores. She completed five articles for the guide, with information on business dining highlights, camping, events, the history of Saugeen Shores, and the area's trails.

Abigail says she also supported and attended many events that brought the community together outdoors - including the Huron Fringe Birding Festival, the Lamont Sports Park Phase One opening, and summer concerts series every week.

"I found it fun to get out of the office and explore the area more," she says, adding that she especially enjoyed having outdoor lunches with her co-workers and exploring the town's natural attractions. "My overall favourite part of the summer was the Chantry Island Tour that we got to do as

tourism staff. We took a boat out to Chantry Island as part of the tour group and got to climb up the lighthouse to see the beautiful view from the top."

Shanna Reid, the town's tourism supervisor, was Abigail's manager and was one of her mentors – a role she says was shared with Abigail's coworkers.

Shanna says that Abigail was able to have different mentors for each of her tasks – providing her with a well-rounded mentorship experience. For example, she had one mentor when writing for the town's chamber of commerce, and a different mentor who taught her more about creating videos for the community.

"That mentor role is so key and important for these young individuals coming into the workplace, sometimes for the first time," Shanna says, adding that the YEE program also gave Abigail's coworkers great experiences as mentors. "I think the staff get more out of something like this . . . it just reminds us that this is really how it should be in any work environment for youth."

She says that over the summer, she witnessed Abigail bring enthusiasm and energy to whatever task she was given – and she was never afraid to ask questions.

Shanna adds that the opportunity also helped Abigail grow both professionally and personally.

"She came very far in terms of her development," Shanna says. "She was very tentative and kind of reserved (when she started), and she just blossomed. This was a unique experience for her, as well as Saugeen Shores." 🍁