



## LakeCity Works Success Story

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When I first approached LakeCity Woodworkers in the spring of 2017, my motivation was to seek supported employment services. As an adult living with a severe Anxiety Disorder, and having had very little practical work experience as a result, I was desperate to improve my financial situation.

As a disabled person receiving provincial Income Assistance, there is barely enough money to survive on, and housing options are severely limited as a consequence. I have been forced to live in two undesirable apartments. Having experienced robberies, sketchy tenants, pests, flooding, and noise - my uncomfortable living arrangements have been an intrusive and dominating force in my life for several years now. Friends of mine were telling me that the only way to escape my housing situation would be through employment. But as someone with little job experience and severe anxiety, this was a daunting prospect. I knew that if I didn't take the first step, however, that my housing situation would never improve. After talking with several friends of mine from a mental health social club, several who had been participants at LakeCity Woodworkers in the past, I made the decision to apply there, in order to try and achieve the change I desperately seek in my life. And that is how I became a LakeCity Woodworkers employee.

From April through October, I was a Survey Stake Department employee. My job was to work as a team member with other persons with mental health issues, to manufacture, assemble, and deliver wooden survey stakes to government and businesses, who would use them to create sidewalks, highways, signage, and much more. I quickly learned how to safely operate several industrial tools, including saws and planers, and learned how to work in an assembly line configuration. I also gained basic customer service experience, and learned the value of hard work. More importantly, however, I learned how to keep some of my anxiety in check.

Throughout my time there, my job responsibilities would expand, as my ability to be more flexible on the job was demonstrated. When necessary, I would be temporarily reassigned to painting drawers for use in fine furniture, and ultimately I was granted a promotion - and an increase in salary - by gaining extra responsibility for the maintenance of an expensive system-wide sawdust collector machine. My senior manager Ken was always helpful and instilled confidence in me, even when I lacked



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the confidence to do a task myself. My other senior manager, Kevin, provided frequent praise, which helped me gain additional confidence in my ability to handle unexpected situations that may have arisen on the job. And my supervisor George was always confident in my abilities to work, and kept my momentum going by saying that I was a hard-worker, and by providing additional work opportunities that helped expand my skillset and demonstrated my job versatility.

Having met many great colleagues, some brand new and some who had been with LakeCity for decades, it was painful for me to consider leaving. However, my goal of seeking better housing has always been a driving force in my life, and since I was young, I had always wanted to work in a retail environment. After consulting with my LakeCity employment counsellor, Nicole, who helped me write a resume consisting solely of my brief work history at LakeCity, I was encouraged - and did, without hesitation - to apply for a Courtesy Clerk position at my local Sobeys grocery store.

One day after submitting my resume electronically to Sobeys, I had an immediate call back from my future hiring manager, who scheduled an interview for me only a couple of days later. Nicole and Abbie were extremely helpful and provided unbelievable encouragement in preparing me for the interview process. Ten minutes into the Sobeys interview, I had been hired, and was immediately introduced to my future department manager.

One statement I will never forget that my hiring manager told me, was this: "Normally we would do a thorough background check on your references and resume experiences; but since you are with LakeCity, we know they've already done that work for us." My resume may have got my foot in the door at Sobeys - but it was LakeCity Woodworkers who provided the structure and support to make it possible for me to be hired.

My future is looking much brighter due to the experience and support I have gained - and continue to gain - from LakeCity Woodworkers. And while my immediate housing situation has not yet changed, I now have the financial tools at my disposal that will someday make that a reality. And I have LakeCity Woodworkers: my managers and employment services counsellors there, as well as my friendly and supportive former colleagues; who helped to build me into the success story that I am today.