



FALL 2022

STAFF PROFILE | LEIGHANN ROWLANDSON

Proof positive we live in a digital age, Leighann was in Spain when she was asked if she would be interested in working at Our WorkPlace! She told us that she's always been interested in adult education, and as a lifelong learner herself, she really enjoys working in the field.

Chances are that when someone comes into Our WorkPlace for the first time, they'll talk to Leighann before anyone else, because her role involves doing intake for the programs offered by the employment readiness program run by Our Place Society. She's been with Our WorkPlace for just over a year, and told us that "it's super fun, keeps me on my toes, and no two days are the same". Leighann tries to inspire clients to pursue education and is incredibly impressed by how so many of them express a strong wish to move forward in their lives.

Before coming to Our WorkPlace, Leighann worked with people with mental health challenges, including seniors in restorative care and in intimate group care situations. At Our WorkPlace, the programs being offered – People in Progress and Digital Job Hunters – are very much geared to individual goals. Indeed, there are instances where a program can be modified to suit a particular client's needs.

Leighann stresses the need for consistent and clear communication between staff and clients. Workshop participants are allowed to be vulnerable. As she says, "everyone who comes in



LEIGHANN

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takes a chance, and showing up is half the battle!" She also believes that it's OK to stay in a place of not knowing.

As clients work through their programs at Our WorkPlace, they find their own way. Their end goal may not be getting a job but might instead be moving on to further education or demonstrating the skills they've gained in a volunteer position. As Leighann says, "the key is to move forward with confidence".

In terms of the future at Our WorkPlace, Leighann sees the programming constantly evolving, and she is hopeful that it continues to expand. She told us she appreciates that every day is different, and the opportunity to develop and build new friendships.

Outside of the office, Leighann is focused on family, food, dogs, and life in general.

Thank you, Leighann, for all you do to welcome and support the clients of Our WorkPlace!

VOLUNTEER PROFILE JENNIFER WOPPENKAMP

It's been more than three years since Jennifer joined the group of volunteer workshop facilitators at Our WorkPlace, and, in conversation with her recently, it's clear her commitment to our clients hasn't diminished one little bit during that time.

"Every group is different," she says, but the energy in the room is always palpable. "I go into each workshop knowing that anyone could be in that room, that our futures are not defined, and that beliefs about who we are don't have to determine our lives."

Jennifer has found that many of the workshop's participants have become what they believe about themselves. She believes that it's important for everyone to build healthy boundaries around money. Some of those she teaches believe in giving to others. However, along with that desire, she teaches that it's OK to say "no" and that we are all worthy of holding on to wealth.

The 2-day workshops Jennifer leads at Our WorkPlace are focused on the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves and the way money works. As a financial services professional, she understands how money works, but recognizes that many of those she teaches don't. "I get how money can show up for them," she told us. "But I want to interrupt the repeating stories and beliefs around money." Jennifer recognizes her students may never have been taught about ways to handle money while still at home and may have no idea of what can happen if they must deal with a financial professional.

Her compassion for the people she encounters through Our Place, and especially at Our WorkPlace, is driven by her understanding – along with the lived experience of members of her family – of inter-generational homelessness and poverty. Jennifer believes that compassion is



Jennifer Woppenkamp

often missing in our community and as a society, we don't always understand or appreciate the Aboriginal experience.

When we asked Jennifer about future workshops at Our WorkPlace, she told us that, in addition to wanting to see them expanded, she would like to be able to follow up with past participants after they've moved on with their lives.

Outside of the classroom, Jennifer is a voracious learner with an endless capacity for knowledge. She is particularly interested in science. In fact, her favourite podcast to listen to now is Gastropod, which looks at food through the lens of science and history. She has two children who are both into sports and she enjoys being involved in everything they do. In addition, Jennifer can trace her love of cooking for a crowd to her Ukrainian roots!

Thank you, Jennifer, for all you continue to do for the clients of Our WorkPlace. Your kindness is changing lives.



Ashley and Morgan

OUR WORKPLACE OPEN HOUSE

Staff hosted an open house on October 18th, to celebrate the 5th anniversary of the creation of Our WorkPlace. The event was attended by staff and friends, along with representatives of organizations that partner with Our WorkPlace, as well as some of the program's graduates. Reflecting on the anniversary, Our WorkPlace manager, Ashley MacDonald, said, "Seeing someone succeed in getting work and watching their confidence grow is an amazing experience and one we think is worth celebrating in the community."

Never
discourage anyone
who continually
makes progress,
no matter how slow.

-Plato-



VEE'S CORNER

As this is the last edition of Hire Ground this calendar year, I want to reflect on the massive changes at Our WorkPlace in 2022. Successfully obtaining funding from the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction has allowed us to offer and facilitate an enhanced version of the ever-popular People In Progress program. This reflects “stickwithit-ness”, defined as “to continue doing or using (something) especially when it is difficult to do so”, on the part of everyone involved. Congratulations to all of this year’s People In Progress grads! You truly exemplify ‘stickwithitness. Best wishes to all our readers and contributors for the coming holiday season, and continued success in 2023!

Vee

PORTRAITS OF SUCCESS LIDIA RAPOSO



Lidia Raposo

Most of us remember the “I Love Lucy” show when Lucy (Lucille Ball) and her best friend, Ethel, get a job wrapping candy on an assembly line – with hilarious and disastrous results. Well, one of our People in Progress (PIP) graduates is living that moment, although we’re assured without the disastrous results experienced by Lucy and Ethel! Lidia recently landed a job on the production line at Rogers’ Chocolates. When we asked her how she likes working at Rogers’, she said

she really enjoys her job and has found everyone there to be friendly and helpful. Although she did say she really has to be quick when applying sea salt to one line of chocolates. Shades of “I Love Lucy”! Lidia told us that taking part in the PIP program, taking the Digital Job Hunters workshop, and receiving one-on-one coaching support from Paula Greene gave her the confidence she needed to find a job she really enjoys. Congratulations on your success, Lidia! We’re rooting for you all the way.

UPCOMING EVENTS

DROP-IN MONDAYS

10:00 am – 3:00 pm

PEOPLE IN PROGRESS (5th intake)
October 24, 2022 – January 20, 2023

DIGITAL JOB HUNTERS

December 5 – 21, 2022

Monday, Wednesday, Friday
1 pm – 2:30 pm

DICKENS!

Featuring the vocal talents of CBC Radio personalities and other special guests, the CBC and Our Place present Charles Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol* on **Friday, December 9th**. A heart-warming evening for the whole family! Go to <https://www.ourplacesociety.com/media-publications/news-events/> for more information.

VOICES

"The program was exactly what I needed, but I didn't know it at the beginning."

Alex

"Let me tell you. I got so much out of the 'introduction to computers course', and bonus...I really enjoyed it. I was computer illiterate before I took the course; now I am NOT."

SM

This program is amazing. Everyone should take it!"

Dana

"Kindness is easy." **Jennifer Woppenkamp (workshop facilitator)**

PIP4 GRADUATION!



From L to R: Randy, George, Amy, Alex, Kat

Five of six graduates of the 4th intake of the People in Progress program were celebrated on October 13th. The excitement and feelings of accomplishment on the part of all graduates were clear for all to see! Of the six people who graduated, two of them have applied to Camosun College for further education, two have jobs, and two remain as volunteers in their work placements.

SHOUT OUTS!

This year's Hungry Hearts gala (held on September 10th) raised \$200,000 towards Our Place Society's food security programs. More than two hundred guests sampled dishes from eight of the region's top chefs, bid on auction items, enjoyed great music, and heard stories of compassion and inspiration. Given the high costs of food our kitchens now face, the support is vital as we continue to serve over 1,000 meals each day to those in need.



EMPLOYMENT NEWS!

Dana Dubetz, a former hairdresser, graduated from the third round of People In Progress and was successful in converting the work experience component of the program into a permanent job at Cook Street Activity Centre! Today, she is the Kitchen Co-ordinator at the centre where, among other things, she teaches cooking and creates a "grab and go" meal once a week for the centre's clients. Dana told us she "loved every minute" of the PIP program, having been introduced to the program by her son, who enrolled in the Digital Job Hunters program at Our WorkPlace. In

conversation with Carol Turnbull, Executive Director of the Cook Street Activity Centre, we learned that everyone there cannot say enough about how Dana has improved the lives of everyone she meets at the centre. "We love her!", said Carol. She also told us that every PIP graduate they have received on job placement has found and, most importantly, maintained employment. "Here at the Cook Street Activity Centre, we're focused on giving people a hand up and not a handout, and we'll always be happy to receive more PIP grads for job placement."

NOTE TO READERS:

This newsletter is produced by Our WorkPlace volunteers, with input from staff, clients, and supporters.