



Employment Matters

Sara blazes City of Edmonton's paper trail

Sara's desk displays a curiously meticulous collection of stuffed animals and a regular resting place for the helmet she wears when she bicycles to work.

It's a quiet space, tucked in a corner of the City of Edmonton's employee records department. Her quirky leg warmers, the Western-themed pendant that dangles around her neck, the trinkets she wears, all hint at her colourful personality.

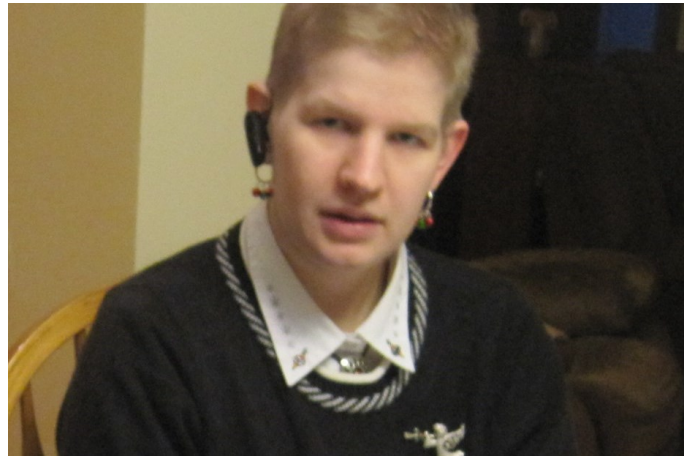
Sara is unique in many ways. She also has an intellectual disability, which has made finding a job a challenge.

But Sara's unique qualities are celebrated by the innovative employer who has seen her become a valued member of the city's staff.

Sara is happy to be at work too. The position has brought meaning and purpose to her life.

"Before I was employed I did a lot of volunteer work and advocacy stuff, but I felt I needed a job to belong. I felt left out because I didn't have one," she says. "The best thing about working is that I get to feel normal. I feel like I belong. I feel like everybody else."

But the city has benefited from hiring Sara. Her perfectionist approach to filing is exactly what



the department needed.

The City of Edmonton's employee records area was overloaded. In a department with more than 12,000 records to maintain, filing something in the wrong place could spell disaster. It would likely mean that paperwork would never be found again.

The city needed a caretaker of these records who could do the job carefully, and who wouldn't make mistakes, no matter how long it took.

When Gateway Association called, the city department decided to explore the idea of Sara as a potential candidate for the position.

Gateway did a tour and an assessment of the employee records area to look at their needs. Then the association

looked at Sara's employment needs.

Sara is extremely detail oriented, likes filing and office administration work, needs a quiet place without a lot of noise or light and limited contact or demands from multiple employees. She wanted an independent work station and a workplace she could bike or bus to from her home. The city was willing to accommodate.

The city hired Sara in May as a temporary, three-month, fully paid employee. Now, several months later, Sara is a permanent city employee. She works one day a week, attends school full time at two universities, and swims competitively. The city is also looking at enrolling her in some employee orientations to assist

A special thanks to the businesses, community partners, and families who have helped make We Belong a success.



Stay up to date. Join our mailing list or follow us on Facebook and Twitter. Find links at www.webelong.ca



Gateway presented Oct. 9 at the St. Albert Chamber of Commerce. Visit our Facebook page for more coverage of the event.

We Belong is a Gateway Association initiative

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HELPING BUILD STRONG COMMUNITIES THROUGH INCLUSIVE HIRING.

Look for this decal on the doors of local businesses who hire inclusively.

her in job development.

Sara feels empowered and the city truly values her contribution to their business.

"They had a need and she filled it," says Renate Burwash, Employment Initiatives Manager with Gateway Association.

It has been a win-win for both.

Traditional ‘job coaching’ outdated

“Job coaching” is a term that carries a stigma, some of which comes from how each organization defines the role.

While Gateway Association believes traditional job coaching is no longer a best practice, we do believe there are roles a “coach” can play in supporting an individual through the hiring process.

Often job coaches are expected to support an employee in a workplace without knowing the job, the company’s culture, or the employer’s expectations.

Some people who live with developmental disabilities have told Gateway that traditional job coaches make them nervous, embarrassed, stressed, and add to the

Effective strategies

- ☒ Support the employee in building a network of support at his or her workplace.
- ☒ Support the employee in finding a mentor or co-worker who will help them when they need it.
- ☒ Work with the employer in building an understanding of how best to support the employee.
- ☒ Support the employer in finding appropriate tools, jigs, and accommodations.

confusion by contradicting the employer. Literature and research around job coaching supports these experiences.

Through Gateway’s role as an inclusive employer and through our inclusive employment initiative, we have found that with the right position, almost every employee can adapt to the natural supports found within a company. They are able to work independently,

Ineffective strategies

- ☒ Doing the job for the employee.
- ☒ Showing the employee how to do his or her job.
- ☒ Sitting idle while the employee works.

without a job coach.

Often it is the employer who needs the support, not the employee.



We are currently seeking the following employment positions: warehouse, electronics (customer service), clerical, and working with animals.

Employment Innovations is a unique approach to employment. Our job is to learn about a business, identify its needs, and fill those needs in creative ways. Our goal is to find businesses a good employee – someone who will bring value to the business with their skills and passion, enhance workplace culture, and contribute to the bottom line.

To get involved, call 780-454-0701 and talk with Renate at ext. 113 or Barb at ext. 109.

Or email: renate@gatewayassociation.ca barb@gatewayassociation.ca Visit www.welbelong.ca for more information.

We Belong updates, news, events

Thanks Leduc Linx!

Gateway Association would like to thank



Leduc Linx Connect, an organization that provides services to adults with developmental disabilities, for its support of Gateway’s We Belong initiative. Linx has nominated more than 20 employers who hire inclusively.

Six of our original job seekers have found paid employment. The true success we have seen has been the trickle effect in their lives and in the lives of their family members and coworkers. Four people dropped out of the program. Four we’re still working with.

We are already working with three people on the waiting list, one of whom has already found a position.

qualify for the display of a We Belong decal:

- have a direct employment contract with the employee;
- pay the employee at least minimum wage;
- provide a work space where the employee works alongside other employees;
- provide a work environment where the employee has the opportunity to be engaged in workplace culture.

Find the list of inclusive employers at www.welbelong.ca/ employers.

Use your consumer power and support these businesses.

Employment update

We are now in our 14th month of the employment innovation pilot.

Inclusive hiring

Please recommend businesses that hire inclusively and meet all four of the We Belong criteria to

Anthony, an Edmonton man with autism who runs his own service-based business, Anthony at Your Service, has had errands and deliveries almost every workday since the Meet Anthony YouTube video went viral. Visit Anthony’s new website anthonyatyour-service.com.

For pickups or deliveries by Anthony at Your Service, call 780-800-9915.

Anthony at Your Service is looking for more employees who live with intellectual disabilities. Contact Gateway at 780-454-0701.