

REFLECTIONS

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Letter from the Managing Editor



Dear alumni,
I am thrilled to welcome you to the latest edition of Reflections. Being part of the cohort that dealt with the uncertainties of the pandemic and lived a 'hybrid' existence, we're honoured to celebrate the amazing accomplishments from within Durham College's community.

Durham College is a special place, one that is full of promise, ambition and opportunity. It's a place where we not only gained valuable knowledge and skills, but also forged lifelong friendships and connections that hopefully will last well beyond our time on campus.

As we reflect on our time at Durham College, we are filled with gratitude for the experiences and opportunities that it provided. It was here that many discovered their passion and found their calling, and all of us will forever be grateful for the guidance and support that we received from our professors, peers, and the entire community. This magazine is a testament to those connections and to the impact that the college has had on alumni's lives and the community.

Every one of us has the potential to make a difference, to make a positive impact on our

communities and the world around us. Let us use the skills and knowledge that we gained at Durham College to make our mark and connect, to create a better future. To all who are featured in this issue, thank you for being a part of this journey, and for sharing your stories with us.

Here's to the future, and the continued success of our alma mater.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sameeksha".

Sameeksha, Managing Editor
Student, PR & Strategic Communications



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Great cooking favours the prepared hands

By Athira Subramania Prabhu

Tre Sanderson's journey from Scarborough, Ont., to being crowned the first Black male winner of Top Chef Canada is a story of perseverance, dedication, and passion. Growing up in a Jamaican household, Sanderson's love for cooking was inspired by his mother's Jamaican-inspired dishes and Caribbean ingredients. "She used to spend lot of time in the kitchen along with my grandmother cooking food that is inspired by Caribbean ingredients," he says.

"Smelling their aroma growing up and understanding the flavour was a challenge, but it was more of an inspiration because I was around food so much. And then, before you know it, I just kind of started going into the kitchen and started cooking and trying to imitate my mother's cooking."

Sanderson's path to culinary success was not an easy one. He faced numerous challenges growing up in the Greater Toronto Area, a city infamously known for its rough patches. "It wasn't easy for me while



We recently had the chance to chat with Tre Sanderson when he came to visit DC's *Bistro 67*.

Photo credit: Durham College

“We are #DCProud of Tre and all he has accomplished since graduation, and we’re delighted that he is returning to campus this month.”

growing up. I just wanted to go work, work hard, and hopefully it would pay off one day.” Despite the distractions and difficulties, Sanderson remained focused on his dream of becoming a chef. He worked hard, honed his skills, and ultimately landed jobs at some of the top restaurants in

Toronto.

Sanderson's passion for cooking and giving back to his community led him to enrol in the Culinary Management program at Durham College, where he was drawn to the program's focus on field-to-table cooking. "I thought the

program was interesting and different," says Sanderson.

"This is the only school that's offering like a field and farm kind of vibe to the table. You look outside the building and there's a whole crop of, like, ready-to-grow ingredients just out your hand."

Seven years after graduating from the program, Sanderson was chosen to participate in Food Network's Top Chef Canada Season X. Despite being relatively unknown compared to some of the more established chefs on the show, Sanderson's talent and determination shone through. He impressed the judges with his Jamaican-inspired dishes and innovative use of local ingredients, ultimately winning the title of Top Chef Canada.

Sanderson's victory made history, as he became the first Black male to win the prestigious cooking competition.

Sanderson's success has not gone unnoticed. He has become a powerful voice within the culinary industry, using his platform to advocate for greater diversity and inclusivity. "There's not a lot of people of colour in this industry," Sanderson notes. "So right now, it's kind of my responsibility to give back as much as I possibly can."

Sanderson's dedication to his craft and commitment to his community was recently on display at Durham College's Bistro '67, where he took over the kitchen for a special

dinner series during Black History Month. The event was a homecoming of sorts for Sanderson, who returned to the school where he first honed his culinary skills.

"We are #DCProud of Tre and all he has accomplished since graduation, and we're delighted that he is returning to campus this month," says Linda Flynn, Associate vice president of Development of Alumni Affairs at Durham College.

Sanderson's story is an inspiration to anyone who has faced adversity on the path to achieving their dreams. As Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "Almost always, the creative, dedicated minority has made the world better." Tre Sanderson is one of those dedicated few, whose talent, hard work, and commitment have made a positive impact on his community and the culinary world as a whole. 🍴



Photo credit: Tre Sanderson

As a first-generation Canadian with roots in the Caribbean, Tre's Jamaican heritage inspires him to incorporate diverse cooking styles into his dishes. Renowned for his creativity, impeccable plating skills, and a constant drive to push culinary boundaries, Tre is on a mission to elevate Caribbean Cuisine to the level of Michelin-starred dining.

A leader on and off the court

By Lauren Morrison

Having what it takes to be a strong leader doesn't come easy. For Sarah John, a Durham College (DC), police foundations graduate, it took becoming captain of the 2000 Lords Women's basketball team to discover her true potential.

Born in Wales, U.K., she and her family immigrated to Canada and finally settled in Whitby, Ont., where she chose to take a scholarship at DC. With several international offers to choose from fresh out of highschool, she decided to start her post-secondary journey closer to home. Enrolling at Durham College in 1996, John joined the Lords Women's basketball team with a mission to succeed. Transitioning from highschool teams to a college-level atmosphere, John knew it was time for her to take action and used her athletic strength to reach her goals.

"I've been playing basketball since Grade 4," she said. "Growing up, I had a lot to juggle emotionally, so I used basketball to take control."

In her first year on the team, John considered herself a rookie and admired her teammates for their hard-earned confidence. She adopted their strengths and learned from their weaknesses to get off of the bench and onto the court. As the year progressed, John went on to be the leading scorer of 2000, as well as help her team to be later inducted into the DC Sports Hall of Fame.

"I used basketball to take control."

John was later voted in by her teammates as captain of the Lords Women's basketball team in 2000. Her growth as a person and a player was important to the team as they needed someone to lead them in the court, as well as outside of it.

Though she was thrilled to take on such an important role, John was undergoing personal struggles in her years of being team captain. She knew she had to support her team and be the best leader



Sarah John standing proud, while on duty in the Kawartha Lakes.

Photo by MacIntyre

possible but didn't know how to juggle different obstacles at the same time. John kept her composure and sought out advice from her then coach, Craig Andrews. From his perspective in such a pivotal time in John's career, he claims she was well-respected by her teammates even before she was titled captain.

"The team loved her," he said. "She stepped up and assumed the role

exceptionally."

Since her graduation, John has worked full-time as a police officer in Toronto, as well as in the Kawartha Lakes, where she is currently employed. She joined the Toronto force in 2009 and claims she always knew it was her calling to become a police officer. With leadership being a driving force in her life, John finds happiness in helping others and takes pride in her career.



Photo by Moghtader

Balancing work and fun, Constable Sarah John enjoys a Toronto Raptors game. Community and community safety is key in her day-to-day tasks, however she finds time to spend quality time with her passions as well.

John's ability to stand up for herself and others has been a prominent strength of hers since being captain and is now being showcased in her career.

From day-to-day tasks to diffusing crises, John is concentrated on treating people with respect, regardless of the situation. In her title

as constable, she focuses on empathizing with individuals, especially those undergoing mental health struggles. John's efforts to bring attention to mental health are important to her as she hopes to be an influential figure in people's lives and often uses the phrase, "It's OK not to be OK."

John's ever-growing passion for basketball is partially owed to her time spent as captain and is recognized through her participation in DC's sports alumni association. She is evolving every day in her career and is proud of the work she does.

Many spend their life working their way up to the top, but for John it was just the beginning.



Connecting countries through skills, students and stories

By Sameeksha

Durham College professor Danielle Harder is on a mission to give students an educational experience that transforms lives. The co-program coordinator of Durham College's journalism program, Harder wears multiple hats at once. Apart from being the regular teaching faculty overseeing the student-led newsroom, The Chronicle, at the college, she is also associated with the college's unique global classroom, Faculty-Led Classroom Abroad @Home and Away (FLCA).

Now, omnipresent in Durham College's innovative and skill-enhancing circle, Harder's journey started in 1994 after she graduated from the University of Regina with a bachelor's degree in journalism. After her brief stint in print, she went on to join CBC Radio and CBC-TV as a general assignment reporter and later shifted to producing.

Later, destiny and deliberation brought Harder to Durham College in 2009.

"When I was a reporter and I wanted to make the jump to being a producer, my then senior producer said one thing about being a producer is that you learn to take satisfaction out of someone else's success," said Harder. "It's like someone else does a great story, you help them shape it and you take all of your satisfaction from that. Teaching is much like that."

Harder fell in love with teaching but she wanted to create a holistic educational experience for her students. While Durham College always had an international education program, Harder brought the skill exchange and storytelling component to Guatemala through Faculty-Led Classroom Abroad, which was later renamed to FLCA- Home and Away.

The program brings a select



Photo by Jamie Arron

Danielle Harder (second from right) has been a professor at Durham College for over a decade. An advocate of experiential learning, Harder has been associated with FLCA since 2019.

group of students from the faculty of media, art and design with high school students in Guatemala. Together, the students use technology to create stories with the aim of educating their community

to make sustainable changes. For example, the students worked discussing on a podcast on gender equality in Guatemala by interviewing their community members. One thing that inspired Harder

to associate with the program was to give domestic students some international experience.

“When you put yourself in a different country, a different culture, a different space, you suddenly learn things about yourself,” she said. “It really appeals to me to put students in situations that are unfamiliar and watch them understand their own place in a global context.”

“It’s like someone else does a great story, you help them shape it and you take all of your satisfaction from that. ”

The fact that students get to use the skills that they learn in the classroom and apply them in real life is just an added advantage of the program that helps them succeed in the workforce.

Alex Cairns, a former student of the broadcasting program at Durham College attests to that. Cairns was a participant in FLCA for two consecutive terms from January 2021 to April 2022. Currently, she is working at The Sports Network as a writer and producer.



Photo by Dave MacIntosh

Taking a step further towards her aim to give Durham College students a holistic education, Harder is now a part of Global Class as a part-time facilitator.

“It really appeals to me to put students in situations that are unfamiliar and watch them understand their own place in a global context. ”

“The skills and lessons learned working with Danielle and FLCA show up in my work now all the time,” Cairns said. “At TSN I wear many hats

producing, directing, editing and hosting, but no matter what I’m doing, I always try to work and collaborate openly and patiently and from a place

that understands the context of the content; things I learned from the FLCA experience.”

Aside from learning a lot through the process of doing FLCA, Cairns also credits Harder’s teaching skills and leadership for her success. “Her kind and thoughtful leadership and ability to organize and prioritize things made the experience both years special and enjoyable,” she said.

After four years of being associated with FLCA, Harder has taken the role of a part-time global learning facilitator. Her aim with an integrated international experienced-based knowledge exchange is to involve students and faculty in innovative ways.

Harder loves seeing international students mingle with domestic students and learn from each other to create a cohesive learning environment. She is continuously working on taking the abroad-learning experience to different faculties and departments.

“They haven’t gotten rid of me yet at the international office,” she said. “I will be haunting them forever.”

First PR steps in the workforce

By Gaia Ninzatti

Imagine, how exciting it must be to graduate after all the hard work done in college. Leah Drewette has just completed her path of study at Durham College. She graduated with honors in the two-year, compressed program in PR and Strategic Communications in 2022. Today Drewette works for Fever Pitch Marketing Communications as an account coordinator, Fever Pitch is a PR agency specialized in tourism. The reason why Drewette chose Durham College was the curriculum: she had a background in veterinary medicine which she had studied for many years, and she was looking for a change. That's how she chose public relations. Drewette was seeking a program that would give her the highest level of knowledge with the minimum amount of learning years. "The reason why I looked into Durham College at first was the proximity to home, but also the curriculum looked

amazing." Drewette said "Lots of writing, which is great." But more important than marks are skills. Skills such as networking; this is a skill that was stressed by professors during class. And now that she is in the workforce, Drewette understands why the professors were so focused on it. In the career of a PR professional networking is fundamental. "If you hope

“The reason why I looked into Durham College at first was the proximity to home, but also the curriculum looked amazing.”

to be published, a good relationship with the media is fundamental" Drewette says. The design skills learned during the program are also very valuable. In the world of a PR professional designing pamphlets, newsletters and social media posts is a day-



Photo credit: Leah Drewette

Leah Drewette graduated with honours in the PR and Strategic Communications program in 2022. Today, she is a happy PR practitioner at Fever Pitch Communications.

to-day task. In class, three semesters are dedicated to the learning of Adobe suite and design software's like InDesign, Photoshop, Premier Pro, and Illustrator. In the world of social media these programs

are crucial and mastering them can make a difference when hunting for jobs. Drewette's experience in Durham College was a happy one; the only thing she thinks she missed

out on was the in-class experience due to the Covid-19 pandemic classes have run remotely. The highlights of the program in Drewette's opinion are the experiences provided during the two-field placement. During the third semester, students are required to work one day a week for a not-for-profit organization. Drewette worked for the ConnectUs 4 Community;

“ If you hope to be published, a good relationship with the media is fundamental ”

here she sharpened her PR skills. Students during the fifth semester are required to seek an internship in a corporate company. Fever Pitch is the agency she chose for her field placement during her last semester of the program. Having such an amazing experience with her, it was only natural for them to extend their contract and make Drewette a permanent member of their team. “The transition was seamless,” says Drewette. As an account coordinator, Drewette's work



Photo credit: Monica Narula
Leah Drewette participating at the Bonjour Québec event held at the Distillery District in Oct., 2022. Bonjour Québec is one of Drewette's multiple clients at Fever Pitch Communications

consists of media relations, monitoring news for clients, clippings, newsletters and more. She is very happy with her job. In the future Drewette hopes to travel for work. Fever Pitch Communications clients include The Jamaica

Tourist Board, PROMPERÚ and Bonjour Québec, she hopes to get to travel to these countries to do press trips. Drewette advises all current students to put a lot of effort into the search for their corporate placement, as

most of her classmates were hired directly by the company they were working for during their placement semester. The Public Relations and Strategic Communications program delivers the highest quality of students to the workforce every year, and they are certainly not planning to stop



For more informations please visit our website at durhamcollege.ca

To find out more about the PR and Strategic Communications Program scan the QR code below



Music to your ears: DC grad receives Emmy nomination

By Kaleigh Duff

Photo credit: Julie Green

Desire to inspire; have you ever met such a passionate speaker? Durham College (DC) grad Kyle Merkley loves to share his experience and inspire students and graduates joining the workforce. Since graduating from the Music Business Management program, Merkley has developed a sizable portfolio of experience in the field of music supervision. From involvement in countless Canadian productions, to the honour of an Emmy nomination, he continues to inspire current DC students in many ways.

In the late 2000s, Merkley graduated from DC with a diploma in Music Business Management. Among one of the first art-related business programs available in Ontario, the insight gained from his time in the program expedited him to his position today, and his stance on the importance of networking. “You don’t know who you’re going to



Merkley is an industry trailblazer, displaying his roots as a DC alumnus in everything he does.

meet or what inspiration you’re going to find,” says Merkley on the application of skills. “So you need to take what

you learn in school, and think critically beyond that.” At DC, it took time and experience for him to process the valuable

lessons passed on to him, and how the insight available to him would boost him in his endeavors after graduation, “I needed to continue to accept responsibility for myself.” he says. The ability to apply the skills learned from DC launched Merkley to be where he is today - a seasoned music supervisor, nominated for a humbling award.

“I needed to continue to accept responsibility for myself.”

“Humbled, honoured, and surprised.” Merkley describes receiving his team’s Emmy nomination for Music Direction on the television series *Ruby and the Well*. For this Canadian graduate and music director, an American-dominated Emmy nomination was a great honour. Although his team did not win the Emmy, it is still an honour to be nominated and considered. Merkley’s rich experience



Merkley's wisdom and experience is an inspiration to current students at DC.

in his field is a great asset to not only himself, but also DC through his status as one of the college's notable alumni. He is regularly invited

back to DC to participate in speaking opportunities to inspire current students. "I have always enjoyed speaking and connecting with people in

person," he says "I am happy to take those opportunities." As a past convocation speaker, and a Pit speaker, Merkley appreciates the good karma of being able to advise others in a way that is helpful to their career, and future. Instilling this type of positive insight strengthens DC's connection to students, and inspires them to navigate their careers with the same drive and passion. DC carries pride in its network of alumni.

Merkley and his success makes DC proud to call him alumni. His desire to pass wisdom on to graduating students boosts the spirits of all listeners, allowing for valuable insight to be shared to new graduates. "I appreciate a lot of what I got from being [at Durham College]," says Merkley "So there is a little bit of payback in coming back to speak." The value of education is a launch pad to greater things, personal discoveries, and overall individual success. Merkley's wisdom, and desire to inspire, is a gift to DC and its endless flow of students. 🍀

Are you interested in joining the DC Community?



Enroll in a Durham College program today! With nine faculties and a sizeable program catalog, we could have exactly what you're looking for. Join us in leading the way.

www.durhamcollege.ca

Cannabis-not only for recreation

By Dazy

Photo credit: Stephanie Massey

Stacy Bobak, a certified Cannabis Educator and a recognized Cannabis Industry Specialist, addressed the repercussions of cancer treatment with the help of Cannabis Industry Specialization (CIS) program at Durham College in 2018. She learnt from this weekend course and now continues to educate people on the medical uses of cannabis.

Bobak enrolled in the CIS program at Durham College in fall of 2018, shortly before cannabis was legalized in Canada. The program is divided into five modules: fundamentals of medical cannabis, the adult use/recreation, the law and ethics of cannabis, the importing and exporting of cannabis, and the micro credentials: Cannabis Business Operations. According to CBC, Durham College was one of the first to offer college-level education on medical cannabis in Ontario.

Bobak completed her first module 'Fundamentals of

medical cannabis' in Fall 2018 and completed the program a year later. Being a proud DC graduate, she approached the program's team to help them out and be more involved in informing people about the medical use of cannabis. She went on to get a job as a course content reviewer in the same program she graduated from at DC.

Bobak said, "With my experience, I was able to work to review the course content as it went out. So, looking at the course content, helping the development team, ensuring that it was best for the students, that it was appropriate, that everything worked on the back end and that was my role in that course."

In 2014, the current dental hygienist was diagnosed with breast cancer. She had to undergo an aggressive treatment plan including surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation followed by another five years of treatment and various medication. That's when Bobak decided to advocate for herself and



Bobak is a certified Cannabis Educator and a recognized Cannabis Industry specialist. She has a keen vision to educate people on medical uses of cannabis and career options in cannabis industry.

research the side effects of the chemotherapy such as its reaction to opioids, pain caused by medicines, as well as symptoms of nausea, hair loss and joint pain.

The struggle to research

her own pre-legalization of cannabis led her to educate people on the medical use and business opportunities related to cannabis.

"I have a health care background and I am the type

of person who wants to gather all of the information before I make an informed decision about my health. So, I started looking into it through a few different avenues”, she said.

Initially, she did not tell a lot of people in her family due to the stigma that surrounds cannabis. “I’m here when they’re ready to hear that” said Bobak.

“My passion project is combining like-minded people who want to educate themselves about cannabis, who want support from their community as an educator wherever they go. ”

Bobak believes that cannabis is still stigmatized due to misinformation. This stigma can be eradicated through conversations with like-minded people, research, and desire for education. She is dedicated to helping her patients and students in any possible way to provide a better understanding on the medical uses of cannabis rather than just for



Bobak is a proud owner of an organization called CannaDent and runs a non-profit organization called Education with some of her fellow cannabis educators and dental hygienists.

recreational purposes.

Bobak is the proud owner of CannaDent (www.CannaDent.ca), where she educates dental hygienists, dentists and her patients on the medical purposes of cannabis. With her fellow cannabis educators, Bobak also runs a non-profit organization

called EduCanNation (www.EduCanNation.info), which is setting the standard for the highest standard of responsible cannabis education, using simple language blended with science, across the nation.

“My passion project is combining like-minded people who want to educate

themselves about cannabis, who want support from their community as an educator wherever they go”, said Bobak.



Honouring Indigenous culinary history

By Leah Drewette

Photos by Leah Drewette and Mya Geerlus.

From early childhood, Tamara Green's culinary journey was already unfolding in her home kitchen. Cooking with her family was just the beginning.

A graduate of the Durham College (DC) culinary management (2017) and advanced baking and pastry arts (2018) programs, Green never forgot her father's words.

"I remember being five-years-old," Green says, "and my dad suggesting to me that I could open my own restaurant one day. That stuck with me."

While studying at DC, Green was exploring ways she could honour her cherished Mohawk grandfather through food. Imagining a six course, Six Nations meal created only from pre-contact ingredients marked the onset of a research project that would shape her career.

After contacting over 30 historical societies, museums, councils and band offices, Green gathered several resources, but noticed major

flaws. All of the collected Indigenous recipes were fused with ingredients introduced by settlers, including wheat flour, baking powder, beef, dairy and chicken.

"There's a place for fusion," says Green, "but when the original cuisine isn't known, it gets to be something else. It can be misleading."

Diving deeper, Green connected with ethnobotanists to learn the relationship Indigenous Peoples had with surrounding native plants, including the Three Sisters (corn, beans and squash), sunchokes, stinging nettle and ramp, among many others. Sustainable foraging practices was a vital component of

Green's research and still plays a crucial role in her culinary practice today.

Intrigued by her personal project, Raul Sojo, executive chef at DC's Bistro '67, encouraged Green to present her vision at an upcoming summer event. Months later, Green plated her concept at Bistro '67's Heritage Series Prix



Tamara Green, DC graduate of the culinary management and advanced baking and pastry arts programs prepares a buffet dinner for business professionals at the Canadian Canoe Museum in Peterborough, Ont. (Geerlus)



Tamara Green enjoying a beautiful day in downtown Port Perry, Ont. (Drewette)

Fixe that featured her hay-roasted venison, fried bean cornbread and ground cherry and honey sorbet. Impressed attendee Claire Sault, former CEO of Noozhoo Nokiiyan Limited Partnership—a branch of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation (MSIFN)—said Green’s cornbread was nostalgic of her childhood.

“We exchanged contact information,” says Green. “A few months later, she asked me if I’d be interested in doing catering for the MSIFN.”

From there, Green landed her first opportunity outside of DC that complemented her interests and refined her skillset. She later launched

Indigenesis—her own catering and personal chef business.

“There’s a place for fusion, but when the real cuisine isn’t known, it gets to be something else. It can be misleading.”

Based out of Little Britain, Ont., and operating since 2018, Indigenesis is one of the very few Ontario businesses of its kind. Combining traditional techniques—such as cooking with a ground oven—with modern kitchen practices, Green recreates Indigenous cuisine using pre-colonial ingredients from the Great Lakes Region and neighbouring First Nations communities. Her food is well-received by clients of all cultural backgrounds, earning her local attention and opportunities in her community.

Green shares Indigenous culture and history with guests at the annual Ontario Culture Days festival. Notably, Green demonstrated the preparation of clay-baked, hay-roasted bison in 2020 and produced videos on foraging techniques in the

weeks leading up to the 2021 festival. The videos preceded Pruning Nature—a guided nature walk with forager Bryan Dowkes—where participants studied plant identification and practiced pruning. Driving the experience full circle, Green prepared these same plants for guests to taste.

Some of Green’s recipes have been published, including her maple-brined venison with wild blackberry and ginger preserves presented in the Fall 2020 issue of Grapevine Magazine.

In recognition of her work through Indigenesis and in her community, Green was nominated for the 2021 Ontario Premier’s Award in the Recent Graduate category. Results were not yet published at the time of writing.

Reflecting on her beginnings in her home kitchen to her time at DC where she began her creative process and made valuable connections, Green has no intention of slowing down.

“I hope to keep improving and learning,” Green says, “and to continue sharing my learning with others, through food.” 🍷

Failure must design you; not define you

By Guedeji Djimi

Photo Credit Chris Paul

Through a philanthropist heart and a resilient mindset, Andrew John Neary, a Durham College student continues to overcome barriers of pursuing happiness. Currently majoring in the Journalism & Mass Media Program, Neary has conquered every trial and tribulation possible to not give up on himself and his dreams of becoming an entrepreneur. His unique road to entrepreneurship has enabled him to create a much-needed platform, a podcast, that advocates for other aspiring entrepreneurs to embrace their own journeys.

It all started in 2016 for Neary. Neary had early struggles of mental illness and trauma from childhood, which he was constantly battling to overcome for seven years. While searching for effective ways to cope with his trauma, Neary started to explore his untapped interest of becoming an entrepreneur. His curiosity led him to enroll in a program that helps youth develop

general business skills and gain substantial experience operating a marketing agency. Upon completing the program, Neary knew he had discovered his purpose in life; social entrepreneurship.

“My goal was to create a safe space where people could go after work to relax and enjoy meeting new faces.”

After the program, Neary took advantage of the resources and connections he made to start his own business. Although Neary did not have a particular business model in mind at the time, his primary driving factor was to have a social impact. He ensured his vision of entering the entrepreneurship world aligned with his true essence of giving back. The best way to combine the two for Neary was to launch his coffee shop, Drinks & Dragons, located in Whitby. “My goal was to create a safe space where people could go after work to relax and enjoy meeting new faces” said Neary.



Andrew Neary appears to enjoy the fruit of his labor at Drinks & Dragons.

“Plus, I was really interested in the coffee world, and I wanted to have a café element to the business,” continued Neary, when asked where he found his inspiration.

To launch his dream business, Neary had to start from the ground up by working at different coffee shops around the city. His goal was to learn everything about the coffee industry and gain restaurant management skills to help him accomplish his dream of opening his own.

In February 2019, Neary

officially launched his café business, Drinks & Dragons, with the help of loans received from several banks and the funds he managed to save over the years.

Upon opening the business, Neary did not waste any time and hosted a charity event to give back to the community. The mission of his fundraiser was to support Ontario Shores, a mental health institution that helped Neary turn his life around. “There are so many people who need additional care but there isn’t enough



Andrew Neary reflects on his journey as an entrepreneur during an interview.

funding for those services, so I felt it was important." "I started running charity events every month and doing a lot of work to grow

the business so that I could have a bigger impact to help my community," stated Neary when reflecting on the early days of his business venture.

Unfortunately, just when the stars began to align for Neary, things took a turn for the worse. After successfully operating the business for

just a year, Neary was forced to shut it all down as the business was not making its demands meet due to COVID. Neary was once again being tested. However, Neary had developed a strong coping mechanism and had built a support system around him over the years that helped him become resilient.

Despite all the roadblocks and obstacles that could have prevented him from pursuing his passion, Neary never showed any sign of giving up on his life's purpose. He was able to reinvent himself and find a new mission. When asked, "What's next for Neary?" he stated that his purpose of giving back remains the same, as he used his experience gained over the years to create a podcast that provides an opportunity for others to have a voice and speak about their entrepreneurial journeys. 🧱

The woman who could achieve everything with a smile

By Alex Nelson

Photo Credit: Bev Woods

Imagine you feel excruciating pain in your mouth, to the point where it is too painful to chew. Your teeth are rotting because you are unable to afford or access oral health care. This is a common reality for many Canadians. Bev Woods, a Durham College (DC) alumna, is taking a stance, one smile at a time.

Woods is a registered dental hygienist, and advocate for access to oral health care for all Canadians. Growing up, Woods' family instilled in her the desire to become a dental hygienist at an early age by always putting her oral health first. After graduating from the DC dental hygiene program in 1986, she has worked hard towards gaining as much experience as possible. Throughout this journey, she learned the importance of community.

"My mom always would say, your smile will show others



Woods at the Gift from the Heart event with the cruiser.

that you care and that you're a good person, and always lead with your smile and your heart will follow," said Woods.

“All the people that I've been mentored by through my entire career have got me to where I am today.”

During 2008, while preparing to open her own dental hygiene office in Trenton,

Ont., Woods was inspired. It was then she founded Gift from the Heart (GFTH), a non-profit organization and annual one-day event that brings together dental hygienists from across the country to offer free dental hygiene services to those unable to afford or access care. The first event saw 16 offices and over 50 dental hygienists participate from across Ontario. Today, 13 years later, the event has 250 locations across Canada.

Expanding and improving GFTH services, Woods now performs oral cancer screenings, as well as teeth cleanings all from the comfort of GFTH's new community cruiser.

When asked about her time at DC, Woods did not hesitate in her praise for her professors and program. She idolized her professors and knew for certain that one day, she wanted to be just like them—successful, compassionate and respected. The dental hygiene program was just what she needed to achieve those goals. It required a lot of attention, organization and motivation to be successful. Woods insists that the program and her professors really set the bar for her and gave her the confidence and skills necessary to really triumph in her career.

"All the people that I've been mentored by through my entire career have got me to where I am today," said Woods.

The relationships that were formed throughout her



Woods graduation from DC dental hygiene program.

schooling at DC really made the experience something to remember and cherish forever. To this day, Woods still remains in contact with many of her previous professors and colleagues and is often still learning from them. Reminiscing on her time at DC, Woods would like to remind students to put one foot in front of the other and do what you love. You only get one time on this earth and it's better to enjoy it.

“Durham College is definitely at the top of my list for places to study.”

“I provide time every year in my schedule to come back and talk to the students that are taking the dental hygiene program, just to let them know where their life, their profession and their career can take them,” said Woods. “DC is definitely at the top of my list for places to study.

With her new community cruiser on the road, Woods has no intention of slowing down. The cruiser will allow for even more accessibility to oral health care. Thanks to DC and

the opportunities given to her and the career she's achieved, Woods will continue to bring people joy, one smile at a time.



To learn more, visit:
giftfromtheheart.ca

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 Gift from the Heart

From inspired to inspiring

Story and Photos by Joshua Clarke

Being a student-athlete is a difficult task. But taking that passion and deciding to become an assistant shows another level of perseverance and dedication to the sport that you play. Lucas Pichl, a second-year assistant coach for the Durham Lords men's volleyball team gives back to his community daily by being a helpful and productive leader for the team. His ability to show extensive knowledge of the sport due to his previous experience as an athlete helps bridge the gap between coaches and players.

“I was eager to share my fresh knowledge with the coming generation of new volleyball players.”

Having such a recent player take on a vital role can heavily assist the relatability between athletes and staff, improving team chemistry and overall making for a successful team. “I mainly wanted to stay involved in the sport that I

previously played for four years competitively during my tenure at Durham College,” said Pichl. “I was eager to share my fresh knowledge with the coming generation of new volleyball players.”

Though it may have been his favorite, volleyball wasn't the only sport that Pichl spent his time in. Pichl was a dual-sport athlete who also participated in the college's golf team, another sport that he was heavily interested and skilled in. Though the workload for two sports would be tough, he took the challenge, showcasing his perseverance. In the end, volleyball seemed to be his calling, but it is interesting to see his outlook on both sports as they are fairly different, with one being team-based and one being mainly for solo players.

“It was very challenging because I also worked, commuted, and had class every-day,” says Pichl. “I never really had any rest days, but I stayed focused, which helped me be successful in volleyball and actually landed me the top GPA for male athletes in my



With years of experience, Pichl inspires young athletes in his role as assistant coach.

final year.”

With such a large workload being put upon you during a college semester, a particularly busy time, the sport alone couldn't have been the only thing to bring Lucas back to DC. Pichl spoke about his previous head coach Michael Hubicki, and how he had

an impact on Pichl's overall outlook on the game of volleyball.

“My head coach, Michael Hubicki, was a huge inspiration to me during my playing years,” says Pichl. “I wanted to share the inspiration and fire he gave me to the new Durham Lords. Michael's



Pichl aspires to pass his knowledge onto students through leading a strong, inclusive team of athletes at Durham College.

“I never really had any rest days, but I stayed focused, which helped me be successful in volleyball and actually landed me the top GPA for male athletes in my final year.”

influence and teachings are currently being passed down to the current team, often prior to games, we will have meditation-like sessions to ensure that everybody is focused on the one goal that we have as a team, which is to win”.

The effectiveness of a coach on a player is huge, but Pichl acknowledges that, and he reinforces that effectiveness while keeping a positive attitude at all times. His extensive work as a coaching assistant reinforces his positive bond with the community

and will lead to a very bright future for the young man and for whatever teams he later chooses to assist. To players, Pichl is more than just a coach, he is a mentor and inspiration to those he leads. His positive attitude and dedication to the community at DC will surely

leave a great impact on the athletes and students involved. It's inspiring to see someone give back to their community in such a meaningful way and Pichl serves as a perfect example of the influence one person can have on a team.



You can go your own way

By Afrika Nieves-Bentley

Photos by Afrika Nieves-Bentley

Go to college; get your diploma; get a job in your field. This is what many people are told as they navigate post-secondary education. However, you never know where your diploma from Durham College (DC) will take you. Darcy and Katherine Burk, the husband-and-wife team behind Burk Digital Factory, have learned this over the course of their respective careers.

Before the business was set into motion, Katherine was enrolled in the police foundations program at DC. She then continued her studies through a criminology bridge program at UOIT (now known as Ontario Tech University).

Back then, she was Katherine Scanlon. These days, she's the vice president of content development at Burk Digital Factory. Her husband, Darcy Burk, is the founder and CEO of the company.

Darcy has an advanced diploma from DC in website development. Though the program is no longer running,



Darcy and Katherine Burk are proud of everything they've accomplished with Burk Digital Factory.

if prospective students want to do something similar, they can study website creation and design through DC's Centre for Professional and Part-Time Learning. Darcy doesn't build websites anymore, but he does help his clients find someone who can do it professionally and efficiently.

So, if they're not doing what they studied, how did a diploma from DC help Darcy and Katherine? It turns out, it helped them a lot! The key is that DC helped them develop

essential skills for success.

Thanks to the skills she learned in police foundations, Katherine has an eye for detail that she uses every day when she writes content for clients. Darcy can tell when a client's website is in need of revision and he knows who to recommend.

DC helped them develop essential skills for success.

Burk Digital Factory creates online marketing strategies for clients using a B2B or business-to-business model. This

means that clients are fellow businesses, not individuals. Search engine optimisation (SEO) is a key strategy for all clients. When someone looks up a Burk Digital Factory client online, they usually end up finding content that Katherine wrote. She makes sure what she writes will stay relevant for a long time—this is what's known as "evergreen content."

Darcy had been dreaming of opening Burk Digital Factory for a long time. As a high school student, he helped friends make professional-looking websites. Burk Digital Factory only recently celebrated its first anniversary, but Darcy is a seasoned professional because of this previous experience.

He stresses that digital advertising is important for the success of any business. He wishes other business owners knew how much a company like Burk Digital Factory could help them.

"Too many people still invest in things like door hangers and print, radio and TV ads," Darcy says. "All these traditional media types of advertising

can have their place, but the massive impact and growth that digital advertising could have on their business is underestimated. A lot of people still don't get it."

Business owners need to be careful when they pick a digital marketing agency, though. Too often, unscrupulous entrepreneurs take money from their clients and don't deliver any results. Business owners need to find someone who understands that they're looking to invest in the long-term success of their company.

"We've had our customers say that the things we do are life-changing," says Darcy.

That's because Burk Digital Factory always communicates with its clients. Communication is the key to its success. And having a B2B model means that Burk Digital Factory does well when its clients do well. Business owners should look for someone who writes an advertising plan, communicates while the plan is in place and then reports on results after the plan is complete. Even if it's expensive at first, this strategy will pay off.


"You have to invest the right amount of money to get the

proper return," Darcy reminds his customers.

Katherine stresses that she and Darcy want every business they work with to succeed.

It's important for a digital marketing agency to help fellow entrepreneurs succeed. That kind of accountability is what sets agencies like Burk Digital Factory apart.

“
**We've had our
customers say that the
things we do are life-
changing!**”

Their industry is always changing, but with the foundation Durham College gave them, they're ready for anything. 

Burk Digital Factory's Mission

Burk Digital Factory wants to make your business successful. They need to make your business successful. Without your success, they have no success.

For more information, visit
burkdigitalfactory.com



Durham College Student Ventures into Adventure Bay

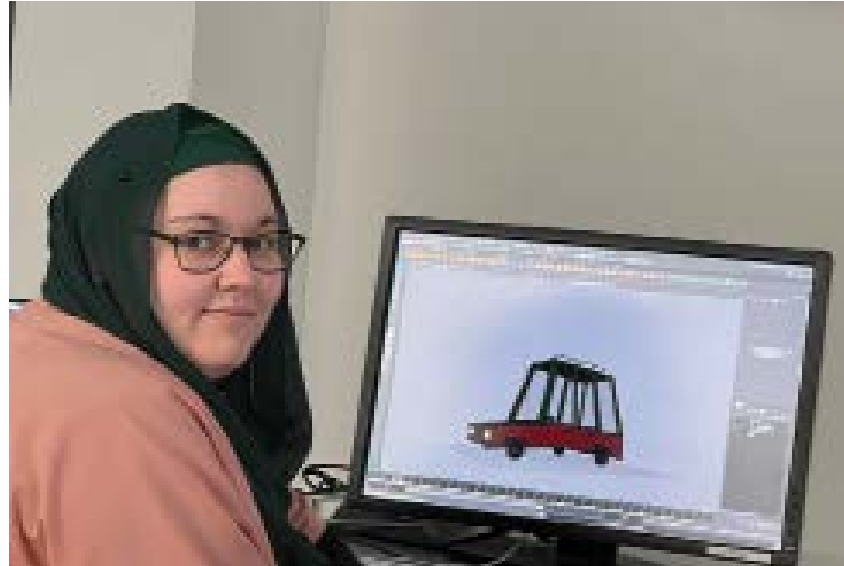
By Adam Ramadhar and Sian Carroll

Have you ever watched your favourite cartoon show and wondered how it was made? For Durham College (DC) animation student Kera Mahmood, she doesn't have to wonder. Mahmood, a third-year student, started the program in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic and has made great strides in her role.

As a child, the only way she was able to watch cartoons was through pre-recordings on VHS tapes. She watched shows like He-Man, ThunderCats, and Scooby-Doo, and feels as though the characters influenced her passions later in her career.

"I've always been partial to Velma," says Mahmood. "She's the most relatable character of the bunch to me. I was always a nerdy kid, and she was more serious."

When she first started her post-secondary education,



Kera Mahmood shows off the finished product of an in-process animation.

“I've always been partial to Velma. She's the most relatable character of the bunch to me. I was always a nerdy kid.”

Mahmood studied to be a chemical engineer before having twin boys that led to a break from school. She had plans to return to school and pursue a career that would guarantee employment upon completion. She reviewed the

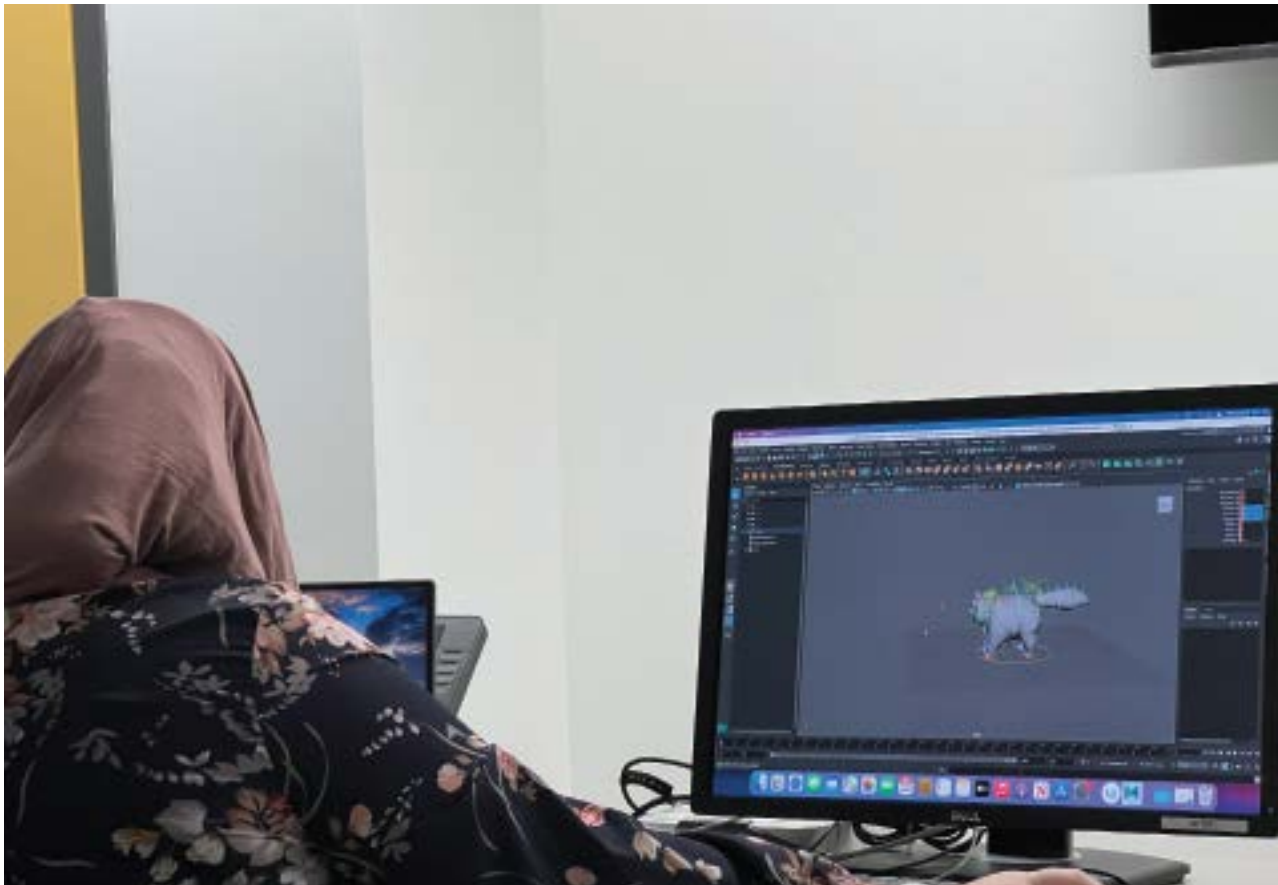
various program options at Durham College and found that the animation program piqued her interest. Mahmood wanted to enrol in a program that would open doors for her and offer a new perspective on creativity. She had a feeling

this one was right for her.

"I was wanting to go back to school and actually finish," she says. "I went through different options for myself, [and] I wanted something for myself to where I could be employed afterwards. Rather than, 'OK, I have this degree, what do I do with it?'"

After watching many tutorials on Maya, a 3D computer graphics software used in the animation program, Mahmood saw how technical the application can be and was further drawn in. She enjoyed the idea of being a part of bringing ideas to life with animations and the complicated aspects that come with it. Mahmood described it as a perfect blend of creativity and science.

Mahmood is thrilled by her opportunity to work in a field that compliments her personality and interests. Her experience at Durham College reinforced her love for the arts



Kera shows us the behind scenes of how a animation is created the process of how they're created.

and encouraged her to make a career out of her passions. From watching cartoons as a child, to making cartoons for

her own, Mahmood has made great strides in her life and career since her time at DC. This is just the beginning for

Kera, and we can't wait to see what she continues to achieve.



“I was wanting to go back to school and actually finish. I went through different options for myself, and I wanted something for myself to where I could be employed afterwards. ”

Quick Facts:

- Kera Mahmood is a third-year animation student at Durham College.
- She was inspired to pursue animation by her love for cartoon shows such as He-Man, ThunderCats, and Scooby-Doo.
- She decided to enroll in Durham College's animation program to pursue a career that would blend her interests in creativity and science.
- She prefers the mechanical side of animation and enjoys thinking like an animator and applying those skills.
- Mahmood feels that her experience at Durham College has reinforced her love for the arts

Durham College sets record for quick-bleed training

By Sian Carroll

Durham College (DC) has become the first post-secondary school in Ontario, and the second in Canada, to offer the STOP THE BLEED training to their faculty and students in May 2022. With their on-campus and online training events taking place from May 12 to 13, 2022, the college community is another step closer to providing resources for people who may need it.

The college hosted over 200 participants to learn about STOP THE BLEED training at both the Oshawa and Whitby campuses, setting the record for the most people trained in a day. The community was able to learn the three core techniques to help with a quick-bleeding injury they may witness. This would include:

- Using your hands for applying pressure on the wound;
- Packing wounds; and



Photo credit Durham College

Thomas Bezruki provides a demonstration of applying a tourniquet to community members as a part of the STOP THE BLEED training.

- Applying tourniquets.

These effective steps are what can save lives.

Participants were instructed by the Office of Campus Safety, Campus Emergency Medical Response Team (CERT) and partners from Sunnybrook Hospital, on how

to react to various situations, how to respond, and how to perform the proper steps. All things people may not have thought of or practiced prior to.

Among the trainers was Thomas Bezruki, manager of emergency management,

Office of Campus Safety at Durham College, and national ambassador and instructor for STOP THE BLEED. He promotes the importance of training for the issue of quick-bleeding injuries with his work and dedication to the initiative.

"[It] gives [people] that



Photo credit Durham College

Community members participate in STOP THE BLEED training with medical equipment and helpful volunteers. With over 200 people engaging in the training, Durham College recognizes this as a huge success for the community.

ability to do it and prepare for it mentally as well. The psychological element of it is huge,” says Bezruki. “Some people can adapt to these types of situations, and others may not be able to. So, it’s a good time to find out what an incident may look like.”

And it’s true. There was a lack of resources for regular civilians to access and learn about these situations and how to handle them, until this event. Many weren’t aware that the average time a person stricken with a quick-bleeding

injury can bleed out is within three to five minutes.

Furthermore, not many know it can take seven to 10 minutes for first responders to arrive to a scene, especially in remote areas. Most people aren’t aware that they can be of help to people who may need it because of the lack of knowledge and resources available.

Following the training events, Durham College installed 30 STOP THE BLEED cabinets with blood-loss medical equipment, including gloves,


gauze and tourniquets. Each cabinet is also equipped with an alarm that tells campus security the location, who can then provide necessary help at the scene along with emergency services.

“For us as emergency service students, this was also a great resource for our education and our futures as health providers, as well as our community,” said Erin Ferguson, student at Durham College’s paramedic program.

Partnered with Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre for

Injury Prevention, Durham College hosted Canada’s first STOP THE BLEED training event. STOP THE BLEED aims to connect institutions and non-profit organizations with training opportunities and quick-bleeding kits for their communities. They hope with this event they inspire more organizations to learn about and utilize these cabinets in their environments.

“Some people can adapt to these types of situations, and others may not be able to. So, it’s good time to find out what an incident may look like.”

DC continues to offer resources for faculty and students. The college’s mission of “Together, we’re leading the way,” shows with their efforts and accolades, and is furthered with this accomplishment. Campus safety for faculty, students and visitor is a priority for the Office of Campus Safety (OCS) and they continue to be proactive with many initiatives. 

Turning a hobby into a career, one book at a time

By Amanda Walmsley

Photos by Amanda Walmsley

There is an old saying that to live a fulfilled life you must make a career out of what you love. Luckily, for Durham College (DC) alumna Erin Wilson, she has done just that.

For as long as she can remember, Wilson has always been a lover of books. After completing her bachelor's degree in sociology and child development and working in the social work field for a few years, Wilson discovered that she wanted to turn her passion into a career. She decided to shift her career path and enrol in DC's library technician program, formally known as library and information technician, which she graduated from in 2017.

"We had the ability to experience out of classroom hours in a library," says Wilson. "I got to go to three or four different placements, which you unfortunately don't get to do with a master's program. I



DC alumna Erin Wilson enjoying some time reading outside of one of her favourite places, which also happens to be her place of work, the Whitby Public Library.

think it gave me the hands-on experiences and actual real-life experience necessary to propel my career forward."

As a successful children and

adult fiction assistant at the Whitby Public Library, Wilson is always looking for new ways to showcase how important libraries are to the public.

"I think it gave me the hands-on experiences and actual real-life experience necessary to propel my career forward."

Recently, Wilson and one of her colleagues decided to make a TikTok account to amp up the library's social media presence. Since the TikTok algorithm is different than most of the other social media apps, they saw it as a chance to not only represent their own library, but to think bigger and promote libraries in general.

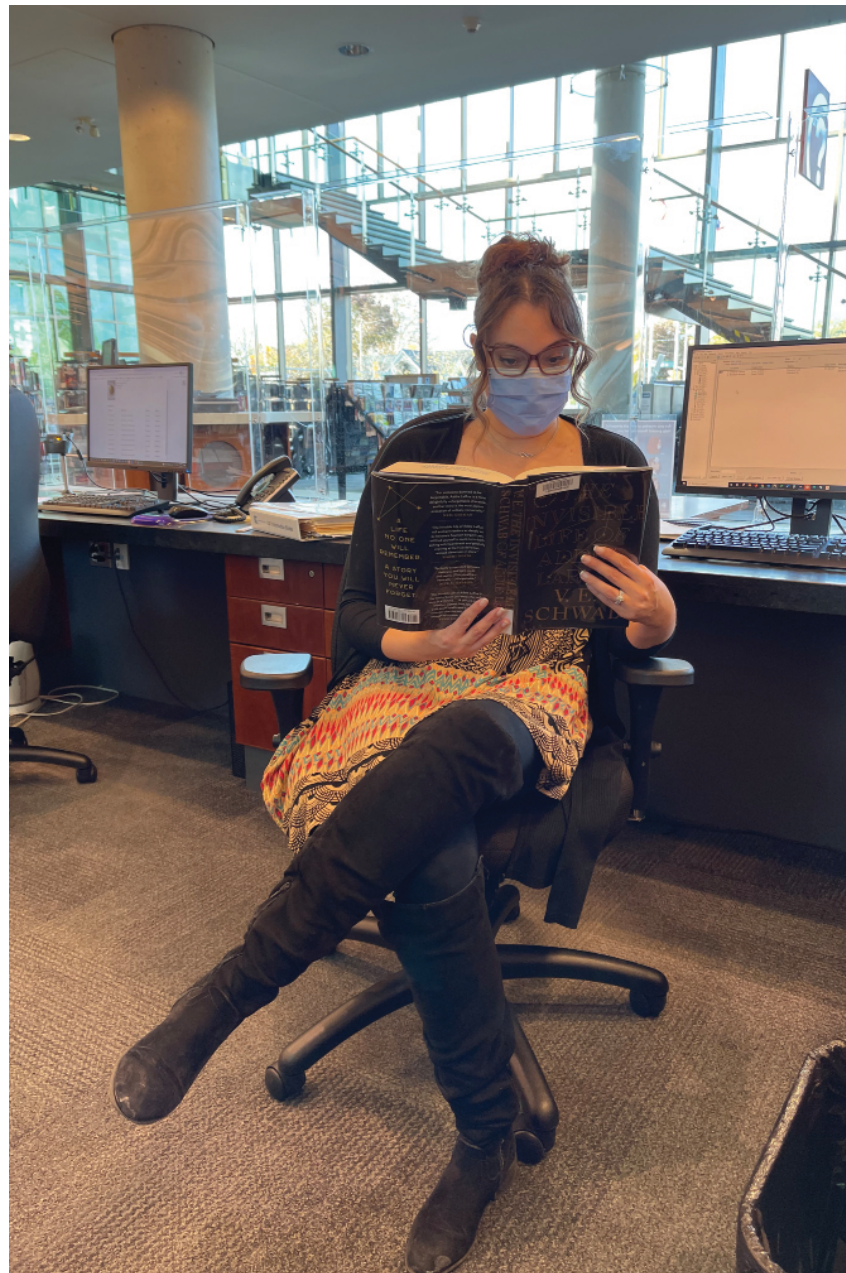
Once one of their videos went viral, getting over three million views and over 650,000 likes, they realized that their dreams of what their account could do was coming true.

As someone who loves interacting with the public and showcasing her love of books, Wilson has started a recent endeavour with a few colleagues by launching a new podcast at the library. The podcast, called Doorway to Discovery, allows Wilson and her colleagues to curate lists of book recommendations based on popular novels at the time and encourage their listeners to read them.

"I always loved books, but I never thought to make it into a

“I get to turn something that I love and that I do at home all the time into my job.”

career, and it just happened,” says Wilson. “Everything sort of fell into place at the right time and it worked out really well. I get to turn something that I love and that I do at home all the time into my job,



Even in her free time, Wilson indulges in her love of literature and strengthens her passion for her career.

which I don't know a whole lot of people who get to do that."

Wilson is always thinking of new ways to expand her career. She hopes to move up positions in the library in the next few years and allow herself to take on more responsibility. As a graduate, she feels as though she is ready for the next step due to her experiences gained from DC.

"I had a great experience at the school," says Wilson. "The staff were lovely, and the students were lovely. It was a really laid-back campus environment, and everyone was always very approachable."

With her ambition and drive,

“I had a great experience at the school. The staff were lovely, and the students were lovely.”

she hopes to continue going into work every day with a smile knowing that she is living out her dreams of turning her most loved hobby into a career. 📖

Give yourself a try

By Tyler Jones

Photo Credit: Michael Scrabonia

During his tenure at Durham College (DC) as a public relations student, Dylan Cooper continuously surprised himself again and again by aiming high, and most importantly, learning how to accept 'yes' as an answer.

As a PR student, you are tasked with capping off your college career by working as an intern at a placement of your choice. For Dylan, he saw this as an opportunity to gain as much relevant experience within his desired field of work, that being sports.

"I honestly think that every assignment I did in college was geared towards sports or hockey specifically," says Cooper.

Despite knowing that no student coming out of DC had ever been taken on as an intern at The Sports Network (TSN), Dylan was determined to get in. He absolutely killed his interview and became the first student ever taken at TSN.

Immediately following his graduation, Dylan began to

apply to relevant positions in the sports field right away. He felt that it was not time to rest despite finally graduating, but rather it was time to begin his career. The second call he received during the application process just so happened to be from the National Hockey League head offices in downtown Toronto.

"I would definitely say get into the work force as soon as you can. A lot of companies are looking for new graduates for entry level positions and you have a lot to offer having just been a student," says Cooper.

With the field of PR growing so rapidly over the past few years, perhaps some luck was involved in Dylan getting hired so quickly. Regardless, he hasn't forgotten any of the valuable lessons he learned during his college tenure.

"I think the biggest asset you're going to get out of this program is how to manage so many different projects," says Dylan. "Especially collaborative work with other people."

That teamwork being spoken of has catapulted the




Dylan embraces his role as manager of social media sponsorships.

NHL's social media accounts to almost double in size on all platforms. The NHL has accumulated 6.7 million followers on Twitter alone. Porter Gray, a graphic designer and co-worker of Dylan's, certainly agrees with this. "How we work together is paramount to the success of our content. We lean on each other all the time," says Gray.

Regarding teamwork, an

interesting aspect brought on by the stay-at-home orders throughout the pandemic, was the total minimizing of his department being able to work together. "Things change so quickly in this business," says Dylan. "It's a lot easier to be in the office working side by side."

After paying his dues as a game time social media coordinator, Dylan has transitioned over to the business side of communications, now serving as a manager for social media sponsorships. "Working with our brand partners and ambassadors on how to integrate their messages through our social media platforms."

All of this is suffice to say that a young student chose his career path based on his interests and stuck to it. He put in the work and was rewarded with his dream job. It's amazing what can happen if you just believe and give yourself a try. 

MAD about Durham College

By Sian Carroll

With over 17 exceptional programs offered in the faculty of media, art and design (MAD) at Durham College (DC), the school continues to provide opportunities for current and future students to lead the way.

On April 4, 2023, the second-year students in Durham College's public relations program (DCPR) hosted an event at the school's Oshawa campus called the 'MAD Tour'. The event aimed to promote three of the school's various media, art and design programs.

The students were tasked in early January 2023 to plan and host an event in their fund development course. The event was to be catered to current high school students—showing them what DC has to offer as they review their post-secondary options.

On the Tuesday morning, over 60 students from Father Leo J. Austin Catholic Secondary School located in Whitby, Ont., and Holy Trinity Catholic Secondary



Photo credit Durham College

Students from Father Leo J. Austin Catholic Secondary School and Holy Trinity Catholic Secondary School filled 'The Pit' in the college's Gordon Willey building.

School, located in Courtice, Ont., filled DC's event space called 'The Pit' in the college's Gordon Willey building.

The event kicked off with speakers Linda Flynn, instructor of DCPR's event planning course, and Barry Waite, executive dean of

faculty of MAD at Durham College. Their warm welcomes and introductions started the day with high spirits.

The high school students were led by their DC student tour guides to three different program sessions throughout the day. The advertising, video

production and public relations programs held demonstrations and presentations for the students, engaging them in live discussion and activities to draw them in.

"We really wanted to show the high-school students what their future could look like." Said Joshua Clarke, second-year public relations student at Durham College.

The event was a success for the DCPR students,

“We really wanted to show the high-school students what their future could look like.”

receiving high praise from their professors and visitors. The students contributed a lot of hard work and dedication towards the event. The 'MAD Tour' was an embodiment of their skills. 📺



