

Daphne Coppieters and 401 Dixie Nissan – May 2008



Daphne Coppieters, an 18 year old student at Rick Hansen Secondary School, faced an interesting dilemma. As a hands-on learner with an interest in auto repair, she found herself in a secondary school that did not have an auto shop and did not offer courses in transportation technology. After considering transferring to a different school, she decided to enroll in a 4 credit co-operative education program during the spring semester of her grade 12 year. Her co-op teacher, Linda Weylie, helped arrange a placement for Daphne at 401 Dixie Nissan in Mississauga, an employer welcoming to students and with a track record for providing excellent experience and training.

To say things worked out well would be a huge understatement. Daphne quickly overcame some initial nervousness and found a comfort level working in the large service department at 401 Dixie Nissan. From oil changes to brake jobs, she was exposed to a wide range of challenges and was able to quickly develop impressive diagnostic and hands-on skills.

Peter Geer, the Service Manager at 401 Dixie Nissan, has worked with many secondary students and has been delighted with Daphne's work. "She is a hard worker who is not afraid to get her hands dirty," he said. "She arrives on time and is willing to stay late to complete a job. Her dedication to the work and her positive manner have earned her the respect of all the guys she works with in the shop."

Other good things have happened to Daphne since the co-op placement began. She was able to register as an auto service technician apprentice under the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP). She received the Future Apprentice Award from the Peel District School Board. And she was offered (and accepted) full-time employment at 401 Dixie Nissan upon graduation from Rick Hansen.

When asked to offer advice to others considering but not sure about co-operative education, Daphne said, "You really don't know how something will work out until you try it. You have to take a chance in order to find out." Her own future plans involve completing her apprenticeship and perhaps down the road, owning and operating her own dealership. With her determination, skills, and pleasant disposition, that road might not be all that long.

