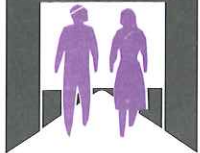


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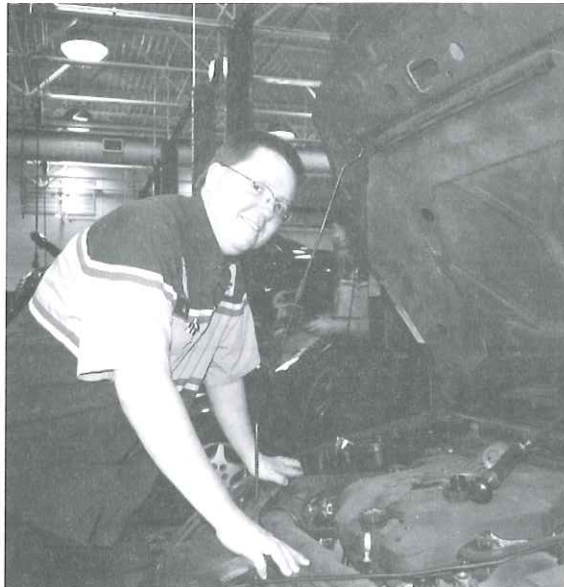
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## James Johnson: Growing into a career

By L.M. VanEvery



I guess you could say, James Johnson, 33, started his career at the age of eleven and grew into it. That's when he first worked on a car at his father's garage on sixth line. "I changed a timing chain on a Chevy van," James said. James recalls the memory as happening before his growth spurt at 13 and he was small enough to climb right into the engine to fix it. Learning about how to fix cars continued for James right into his 20s. "I always worked on cars all my life," he said. It was this early learning that played a major role in a decision James made later when he visited **GREAT** for training assistance.

After leaving high school in the late 90s without graduating, James worked at a variety of jobs. Some jobs were acquired through temporary agencies and some were at factories. The job James worked at the longest was installing industrial commercial shelving which he did for about five years. Although he liked the work, he knew it wasn't something he wanted to do as a career. "It wasn't a lifelong goal," he said.

In 2007, James decided to return to school to complete his grade 12. After he graduated, he visited **GREAT's** Brantford satellite office to see what was available to him. Viola Hayde, Program & Services Officer, helped James register at the Ogwehoweh Skills and Trades Training Centre (OSTTC) in the Automotive Service Training course. With all his prior knowledge of automotive work, this seemed like a perfect fit. "I already knew quite a bit about vehicles and how to repair vehicles," he said. James joined the class in June 2008. Since he had already completed his grade 12, James began his studies at the first level automotive training module.

In September 2008, **GREAT** placed James with Forbes Bros. in Brantford for his work placement. During his placement, James learned how the service part of the car dealership operates. He learned all aspects of the shop in the company of twelve other mechanics. "They do everything here including brake work and engine work," James said.

When his placement concluded in November 2008, they offered James full-time employment and he's been there ever since. He admits there's been a lot of changes in the automotive industry since he changed his first timing chain at the age of eleven. With the continual introduction of new technology, James recognizes the difference. "Some things are easier. Some things are harder. But it's still hands on work," he said. The best part of James' job is that he's always learning something new. But that's also the most challenging part of his job. He needs to stay up to date with all the new technology.

James is grateful for all the help he received from **GREAT**. "They helped me get my foot in the door," he said. "They have the connections with placements and they gave me a headstart." James plans to gain all the experience he can at his new place of employment. He's already completed the second level automotive training and will graduate this month from the third and final level of automotive training. Then he plans to write the exam. In the automotive industry, there's always opportunities to upgrade and specialize. In terms of specializing, James plans to concentrate on gaining general experience. "I'm just starting," he said.

For more information about job training and apprenticeship opportunities, contact **GREAT** today.