Dan's Warehouse

Dan's Legacy

Dan's Warehouse Project 2018

A work-skills training program for youth in care, or aging out of care, with barriers to employment.

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Executive Summary

Dan's Legacy envisions a work-skills training program for Lower Mainland youth in care and those aging out of care with barriers to employment. The proposed program covers three occupational models: Vehicle Operation, Warehousing Commercial Food Production, and Bicycle Mechanics. Recruitment, assessment, training and placing of clients in these occupations are the primary goals, along with providing therapeutic counselling, life-skills instruction and secure housing to the participants, some of whom may be affected by mental health issues. Each model will be designed to meet the current and future needs of the representative industries, soliciting input from industry professionals and others to ensure the program provides consistency with best-practices. Instructors will be industry representatives with business connections, ensuring a greater likelihood of job placement for the students upon graduation.

The Need

Youth in care, and those aging out of care, face significant barriers to finding employment within their community. Lack of a Dogwood Diploma and employment experience is prevalent amongst this cohort. With few skills, job opportunities are minimal and provide little chance for growth. Despite this bleak outlook, these youth remain optimistic, idealistic and keen to take advantage of skills training opportunities offered to them.

Details of Proposed Program

Commercial Food Production & Culinary Program

There is an abundance of surplus food available for collection at Lower Mainland grocery store chains, as is evidenced by the 25 years of surplus food reclamation managed by Dan's Legacy's staff and associates. While the surplus food is unspoiled and completely safe for consumption, it has little shelf-life left and must be used immediately. With the supervision of trained industry professionals, students in the Commercial Food Production model will prepare, cook and package the foods to be delivered to various organizations including schools, missions, churches and other not-for-profit groups providing food security in the community. This "teaching kitchen" will be professionally outfitted with industry-standard equipment to manage large volumes of product and ensure commercial quality is maintained. Students will receive FoodSafe Certification, food preparation and industry equipment training, as well as assistance in finding industry employment upon graduation from the program.

Warehousing

We propose a warehouse facility that supports the "teaching kitchen" in the management of product receipt and delivery. The commercial warehouse will contain receiving and delivery bays, a sorting area and long-term storage area. Recovered surplus food will be sorted and then: sent out immediately to our community partners in food security for their food banks and meal programs; be directed to the teaching kitchen for preparation before future distribution; or stored if shelf-life permits for future distribution to program partners. Students will receive training in Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS), Working at Heights and Forklift Operator Training.

Vehicle Operation

The program will obtain, maintain and operate a fleet of vans and trucks to be used in the collection and distribution of recovered surplus food. Students of the program will receive training in: commercial vehicle operation; basic maintenance; and safe driving practices. In many cases, having a driver's license is critical to gainful employment. The program will assist students in either obtaining a Class 5 N license (if they start without a license), or graduating to obtain a Class 4 (if they start with a license). Graduates from the program could find employment as professional taxi and truck drivers, couriers and bus drivers.

Details of Proposed Program (con't.)

Bicycle Mechanics Program

We have entered into an agreement with Our Community Bikes, a long-standing community bicycle shop in Vancouver's Mount Pleasant neighbourhood providing do-it-yourself bicycle repairs and affordable bike maintenance. A few of their mechanics took the Sanctuary Foundation's Bike Mechanic Work-skills Training Program as at-risk youth more than twenty years ago, and now as adults want to give back to the community by offering a similar program in partnership with Dan's Legacy. Together we will offer this program again, contained within our Warehouse Project. This is the perfect course for alternative youth who may not fit in regular businesses. Our Community Bikes conducted extensive market research before approaching us and has determined there is a strong demand for skilled bike mechanics in the cycling industry.

Program Format

The four-month training schedule proved effective as an education delivery model with the Sanctuary Foundation for over twenty years. The process is as follows:

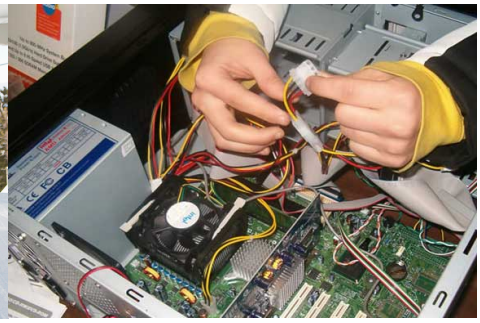
- Clients begin with a workshop within the category they choose.
- Instructors are soon able to determine which students will thrive in the four-month module.
- Initial intakes are usually double the number of students to account for attrition in the first few weeks.

After the four-month workskills training module we then place the client into a two-week work practicum with a potential employer. Most will stay on as a new hire with that company. If they do not find work right away, we keep them working within the project until another work practicum, or immediate employment, can be arranged.

Clients diagnosed with spectrum disorders such as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or high functioning Autism/Asperger's, will audit the course, with the clinical supervision and support of our therapists, for as long as necessary to master the work-skills they will need to gain employment. We plan to take on two such clients within each work-skills Training Module and will cover the costs for their tuition and counselling support through our fundraising efforts.

Growing Our Food Security Operations

Our current surplus food recovery program collects and distributes approximately $70,000 worth of food each month and ensures more than 400 people in the Lower Mainland meet their basic food needs – with the support of only one retail grocery store. Our team has also trained two other non-profit organizations in food reclamation, widening our reach on food security in the community. The gap is substantial, but with support we can have a significant impact. There are dozens of retail grocery stores that could be encouraged to participate in this program once it is up and running. And there are many, many organizations helping the community that would welcome this service with enthusiasm and relief.



History of Success

For 18 years (from 1984 to 2002), Tom Littlewood founded and operated the Sanctuary Foundation in the Lower Mainland. This organization offered work-skills training to youth in bicycle mechanics, computer technology, and in the ski lift and marine industries. The youth received a training certificate and most found work in the industry of their choice or a related industry. Many used these first jobs to move up in their industries or in similar careers. We have an established model and the experience to launch this training program again through the Dan's Warehouse project, helping to meet the need of at-risk youth for job skills training. Gainful employment lessens the risk of homelessness, cascading mental health issues and suicide. It's a Harm Prevention strategy with proven success.

Participants

We plan to recruit participants for the project from our current partners: Aunt Leah's Place, Broadway Youth Resource Centre, Coast Mental Health, Ray-Cam Cooperative Centre, REACH Community Health Centre, Cwenengitel Aboriginal Society, Tsawwassen First Nation and Kwikwetlem First Nation. Youth receiving services from the Ministry of Children and Family Development will also be encouraged to participate.

Our Partnerships

Dan's Legacy currently has relationships with a number of organizations that will be solicited for insight and support, ensuring industry best practices are employed in the design and execution of the programs. We are currently associated with the following organizations, with whom we are either partnering on the delivery of our counselling programs, or who have expressed an interest in collaborating with us on future projects: Coast Mental Health Culinary Training Skills program; the H.A.V.E. Culinary Training Society; Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Faculty of Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems; the Earthwise Society (sustainable agriculture); and Aunt Leah's Place "Bootstraps" program, which provides skills development and job placement opportunities for youth.

Funding

We plan to approach granting organizations and municipal, provincial and federal governments for financial support, including securing funding to help cover some of the hard-capital costs to build a commercial kitchen, warehouse equipment and the vehicles needed to collect and distribute surplus food. We are growing our partnerships with other mental health and youth-oriented non-profit organizations, and have many deserving youth keen to participate. With your support, we can make this project a reality.

Contact us

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