

Bangor Goodwill provides opportunity for autistic Hampden man

BY NOK-NOI RICKER
OF THE BDN STAFF

Cameron Steltzer, 23, of Hampden had applied for jobs at several local businesses, but the autistic man was always passed over.

"I had a few [job interviews] where a more experienced guy walked in and took it," Steltzer said recently.

A year ago he told his parents that all he wanted for Christmas was a job.

Soon after, he applied at the Bangor Goodwill store.

Steltzer landed a sales associate job, "because they needed someone tall -- it seems," he said.

Store manager Shirley Hall said Goodwill is a place that employs people with disabilities and others who experience barriers to finding independent work.

"That is one of our claims to fame," the store manager said. "It's such an added value to our store."

Each Goodwill applicant starts with an assessment of abilities, and the job is tailored to suit

the strengths of the employee, Hall said.

"I want to strengthen their weaknesses but let them do what they want to do," the store manager said. "It's finding out what [they] can do and what I need."

Goodwill Industries of Northern New England offers several programs designed to assist people with economic and social independence, and operates 18 thrift stores in Maine that resell donated clothing, household goods and shoes.

"There are [people with] a lot of different barriers here," Hall said later, listing color blindness, the inability to read and autism as challenges some of her approximately 60 employees face.

Autism is a neurological developmental disability that affects normal development of the brain in the areas of social interaction, communication skills and cognitive function, according to the National Autism Association. Steltzer has not let it hold him back. He is a graduate of Hampden Academy

and he also has a driver's license.

The benefits of having a job are more than just bringing home a paycheck, said Cameron's mom, Leah Steltzer.

"When you've got to work, you go out and you go," she said. "A lot of good things happen when you go to work. He's more independent and has his own money."

Cameron Steltzer lives at home and puts most of his earnings into a savings account, but spends some of it on healthy foods.

"I figure it will pay off over time," he said.

His work is paying off for the store, according to his boss.

"Cam is such a good employee," Hall said. "He's such an independent worker. He usually tells me what he wants to do. You don't have to remind him, he just does it. He likes to help customers."

Steltzer's first job was scanning and sorting books, but it was difficult for him so now he spends his time pulling items off the shelves or racks that



BDN PHOTO BY GABOR DEGRE

Cameron Steltzer, 23, of Hampden told his parents last year that he wanted a job for Christmas. Cameron has autism but he was able to find a job at Goodwill in Bangor where he has been employed for the past year.

are dated and putting out newly received items to give customers a rotating selection.

"I've made some friends, yes. The workers are all nice and friendly," he said in the lunchroom at the store.

The best part of his job is finding "oddsities."

"I've found women's

bras in men's shirts and batteries in boots and kids' shirts in men's pants," the Hampden man said. "I wonder what I am going to find next in oddsities."

It's the kind of active job he enjoys.

"I'd fall asleep if I was stuck at a desk too long," he said.

Now that he has mastered doing pulls and putting out merchandise, Steltzer is thinking about a new challenge at the store: to "take a look at cashiering."

That is a huge step, his mother said.

"It just changed everything for the better," she said.

Bangor Pre-K and Kindergarten registration set for Feb. 8 and 9

The Bangor School Department Pre-K and Kindergarten registration will be held from 4 to 7 p.m. on the dates listed at the following locations:

Monday, Feb. 8, at Abraham Lincoln School (45 Forest Ave; phone 941-6280) and Vine Street School (66 Vine St; phone 941-6300)

Tuesday, Feb. 9, 2016 at Downeast School (100 Moosehead Blvd; phone 941-6240), Fourteenth Street School (224 Fourteenth St; phone 941-6350), and Fruit Street School (175 Fruit St; phone 941-6270)

Please register your child at the school that he/she will attend.

Pre-K (half day four-year-old program) is for children 4 years old on or before Oct. 15, 2016. Kindergarten is for children 5 years old on or before Oct. 15, 2016.

Please bring the child's original birth certificate, immunization record, and two proofs of residency (driver's license, utility bill, tax bill, etc) with you on either registration dates. Children should NOT accompany their parents at the time of registration. Student orientation will be held on another date. If you are unable to register on the date listed, please contact the school where your child will be attending before February 9.

Hampden Town Council names mayor, deputy mayor

The Hampden Town Council tapped member David Ryder for a second consecutive term as mayor during its Monday night meeting.

Councilor Greg Sirois was elected deputy mayor.

Despite the fact that he was a target of negative campaign emails that purportedly came from the Hampden Association of Landowners, Sirois was the top vote-getter in his bid for re-election last November.

Also returned to the council after a one-year absence was Ivan McPike, who was the focus of a negative robocall financed by former Mayor Carol Duprey.

Sirois and McPike both were sworn in during Monday night's meeting, as was Mark Cormier, the third councilor elected in November.

Maggy Lespinasse, M.D., joins Penobscot Pediatrics in Bangor

Penobscot Community Health Care is pleased to announce that Maggy Lespinasse, MD, has joined the medical staff of PCHC's Penobscot Pediatrics, 1068 Union St., Bangor. Dr. Lespinasse's practice centers on all aspects of high-quality pediatric medical care, including patient physicals and acute visits.

Dr. Lespinasse received her undergraduate degree from York College of the City University of New York, and her medical degree from New York Medical College, followed by residency at Westchester County Medical Center. Prior to joining Penobscot Community Health Care, Dr. Lespinasse worked at Providence Community Health Care.

"We are so pleased to welcome Dr. Lespinasse to our Pediatric Practice. Dr. Lespinasse has over 22 years of experience working with children and their families and will be a wonderful asset to our team," said Noah Nesin, MD, PCHC's Chief Medical Officer.

Dr. Lespinasse who is Board Certified in Pediatrics, is seeing patients at Penobscot Pediatrics. Penobscot Pediatrics is open seven days per week and, in addition to pediatric medical care, offers Walk-In Care, Mental Health Services, and Care Management.

Public Relations Council to hold story pitch forum at Husson

The Maine Public Relations Council will have a professional development session titled, "Meet the Media and Pitch Your Story," held on Jan. 22 in Bangor. Public relations practitioners of all levels are invited to attend and have face-to-face interactions with local journalists, as well as pitch their stories to experts. Bangor panelists include Deke Rhinehart, digital media and technology director at Zone Radio; Angel Matson, assignment editor at WABI; Aimee Thibodeau, managing editor at Bangor Metro; Anthony Ronzio, director of news and audience at Bangor Daily News.

The Bangor session is set for 8 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Friday, Jan. 22 at the Richard E. Dyke Center for Family Business, Husson University. There will be networking from 8:30 a.m., the panel from 8:30 to 10 a.m., and a workshop from 10:15 to 11:30 a.m. This session will include a pitching workshop in which attendees will pitch a story and get feedback from the panel of experts. Cost: Panel discussion only: MPRC Members: \$20, Non-members: \$35, Students: \$10; Panel discussion and workshop: MPRC Members: \$25, Non-members: \$40. Includes breakfast.

Professional development sessions and workshops will be held on the third Friday of each month. For more information, visit meprcouncil.org.

Bangor Public Library reopens this week

The Bangor Public Library reopens its doors to the public this week, after a two-month shutdown for renovations.

"People will find a new library when they come in [this week]," Barbara McDade said Friday, Jan. 7.

Despite all the work, the library will still be very much a construction zone. The century-old building is in the midst of a major makeover.

McDade, the library's director, said crews are still only in stage three of the five-stage project.

The library was closed from Nov. 16 until this week to allow crews to complete some of the loudest, dirtiest work uninterrupted.

Library employees spent much of their time during the shutdown placing identification tags in more

than 250,000 books. Those tags will allow for self-checkout and help library staff find misshelved books and identify missing books using an electronic wand scanner.

McDade recommended people enter on the first floor through what used to be the children's wing entrance. That is now home to a renovated circulation area. The library's original entrance, up the granite front steps and through the wooden doors, also will be open.

The updates and repairs are the result of a \$9 million fundraising campaign, with \$3 million donated by the Stephen and Tabitha King Foundation, \$3 million coming from a voter-approved bond, and the rest coming from private donations throughout the community.

The \$3 million replacement of the library's leaky copper roof already has been completed.

McDade estimated about \$1 million of that would go toward the library's endowment fund, which pays for library operations. About 40 percent of the library's annual budget comes from the endowment with the rest coming from the city.

Renovations are expected to wrap up in May.

"We hope the public will be patient with us as we find where everything is and how everything works while construction continues," McDade said.

Pages in Time

A look back at stories and snippets from past issues of the Bangor Daily News.

The Weekly

Make a Date

Art, children, clubs, fairs, fundraisers, meals, museums, music, etc.

The Weekly CALENDAR

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