

Discovery works

Youths learn to map out their futures

BY ANNE-MARIE CURATOLO
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Aside from the Coopérative Jeunesse de Services, at least one other service available to help young people map out their future is DiscoveryWorks.

WEST ISLAND

Founded by Carmen Sicilia, the two-year-old program is designed to help students develop their career paths. The two-day workshop includes assessment exams intended to help the students learn more about themselves.

"We look at their personality traits, values and interests," said Sicilia.

Soria Mancuso, 19, said the workshop helped her realize she is the type of person who needs a lot of organization.

She has since learned how to better organize class notes and has improved her study habits.

The Dorval resident said her marks have since improved.

"You learn what kind of person you are and how you learn best," she said.

After completing research on how teenagers were choosing their careers for her psychology thesis at Concordia University, Sicilia, 35, learned that not much had changed since the days when her parents were choosing their future paths in life.

Many students go into whatever field their friends and parents recommend, without a solid understanding of what they will be studying and why, she said.

Sicilia noted that high school counsellors are usually so busy providing personal advice and assistance

that they don't have time to provide career-based counselling in schools with 700 students.

As a result, this type of advice usually ends up coming from friends and family, she added.

"The dropout rate at CEGEP is 40 per cent because people get in a program, and they don't know why they're there," she said.

Sicilia remains in contact with all of those who have ever participated in DiscoveryWorks. Most of the students are either in Grade 10 or 11 and in the midst of deciding what to study in CEGEP.

"The follow-ups are the reason why it's effective," she said of the DiscoveryWorks program.

She ensures members have their application forms in proper order and that they are mailed before the due date. She also helps them with applications for student loans.

"I make sure they follow through with their plans," she said.

Another important element of DiscoveryWorks is frank discussion about what lies ahead.

"We definitely clarify any misconceptions about the job market," Sicilia said.

"Today we change careers about six or seven times in our lifetime."

The students also participate in library research to gather information about various occupations. Sicilia arranges for the teenagers to meet with a professional in the area which is of interest to them.

Mancuso, who said she knew she held an interest in commerce before the workshops, was also thinking about studying political science.

After meeting with an employee of the French Embassy through DiscoveryWorks, she discovered she

definitely wanted to be involved in this field of study.

Mancuso is currently majoring in finance and minoring in political science at Concordia University.

She noted that the political science class she recently completed represented her highest grade. She is now considering a career with the government or consulate.

Julie Boyer, 16, had the opportunity to tour CFCF 12 and speak with various members of the media as well as observe the editing process.

"It was extremely interesting. I was in awe," said Boyer, a Dorval resident, who has always dreamed of being a movie director.

DiscoveryWorks provided her with the guidance she needed to attain her goal.

"I didn't know how to go about it. I learned what programs to enter and which were the best schools."

Boyer plans to enter the arts program at Dawson College, followed by the film program at Concordia.

"She encourages you to do something because you like it, not because your parents told you to, or because it pays a lot," said Mancuso.

She admitted she was extremely skeptical when entering the program with her sister and cousin, but was glad she enrolled.

"Everyone in the group is involved — it's not boring."

The groups are composed of a maximum of 15 people, and workshop are held in downtown Montreal. Sicilia is currently looking for a West Island location because of the program's popularity with people in that area.

The next workshop will be held in October. The cost is \$290. For more information, call 382-9696.