

# GREAT LAKES ADVOCATE

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### They're cooking up skills for life

ELLE WATSON  
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ASK any baby boomer, generation y lacks initiative, motivation, a sense of get up and go – not a group of proactive young people committed to working in the Great Lakes.

These gen ys have been tasting all facets of working life as part of a Break Thru People Solutions Transition to Work program for individuals with disabilities.

Over the past 12 months members of the group have worked for a local business at least one day a week for up to eight weeks and now they're heading into the kitchen.

Forster's Reef Bar and Grill is offering up its kitchen and head chef to give the crew a glimpse into the hospitality industry.

"It will be a workshop system with emphasis on training of local young people and building a rapport so they're ready to go into any kitchen and hopefully inspire a bit of confidence as well," head chef Sonia Van De Stadt said.

Their duties in the kitchen will begin with simple food prep leading into more difficult tasks over eight weeks in the lead up to a full service.

Transition to work consultant Jacqueline Di Francesco said just entering a working commercial kitchen was a major coup for some of the young people who suffer with intellectual disabilities, mainly learning difficulties.

"We teach them about self advocacy, their rights as adults, money handling and things like using a key card."

When they're not in the kitchen the group spends the remaining days of the week at Break Thru developing skills to help them through the transition to work.

"We have mock days where they come dressed in work clothes which helps to build their self esteem. It's going from a child's life to an adult's life," Ms Di Francesco said.

For Darren Leaudais and Ellie Mugiven, both 19, the program isn't their first on the job experience.

Darren has worked for a local mechanics outlet while Ellie has tried some aged care and reception work.

"I developed some long term relationships there and I love working with cars and this should be good as well," Darren said.

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HAPPY IN HOSPITALITY: Members of Break Thru People Solutions Transition to Work program Ellie Mugiven, 19, Darren Leaudais, 19 and Teila Bulmer, 21 learning some tricks of the trade from Forster's Reef Bar and Grill owner Darren McDonagh.

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