

# Summer Company



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# The Summer Company Experience

Ontario's economy is driven by entrepreneurs and small business. In fact, 99 per cent of all businesses in our province have fewer than 500 employees. Entrepreneurs are creative, take risks and generate new opportunities for Ontario domestically and abroad.

Since the Summer Company program began in 2001, nearly 2,000 high school, college and university students from all areas of the province have taken part. Operating a wide range of businesses reflecting a variety of interests and pursuits—from swimming camps and cafés to personal training and website development—participants have worked hard, taken advantage of unforeseen opportunities and overcome unexpected challenges.

The stories that follow represent just some of the many exciting ventures that young Ontarians launched last summer. Those profiled here—and all the other Summer Company participants—are to be congratulated for their effort and determination.

Clearly, they have what it takes to become tomorrow's business leaders and contribute to Ontario's growth and prosperity.





## Absolute Goaltending

**Matthew Bourgeois**  
Bowmanville

### “I networked, cold-called and generally worked hard.”

Matthew was seeking to finance his idea for a summer school for hockey goalies when his bank manager told him about Summer Company. When he submitted his application, the program provider staff person was impressed. “Matthew’s idea was innovative,” she recalls. “It truly represented entrepreneurialism at its best.”

Matthew found affordable space for his sessions by leasing a rink from an established hockey school, who also shared their computer registration system with him. Although he priced his sessions competitively and was attracting some students, registrations for the months of May and

June lagged his forecast. Matt tackled the problem by adding an extra session late in the summer and promoting it all he could. “I networked, cold-called and generally worked hard,” he recalls. The result was a strong month of August that brought his sales back up to his forecast.

After one summer, Matthew has established himself as a go-to person for excellence in coaching goalies, and *Absolute Goaltending* shows no signs of slowing down soon. Matthew’s advice for anyone considering starting a Summer Company business? “Go for it! And make a lot of cold calls!”



## Keith Brown Magic

**Keith Brown**  
London

### “The Summer Company program is a great opportunity and experience, so take advantage of it.”

No gig was too big or too small for Keith Brown in his summer-long mission to perform magic through all possible means. “I performed at kids’ shows, I busked, I worked at golf tournaments, corporate events, private parties, as a regular restaurant act and even at a magic camp in Haliburton,” he says.

A key area of learning for Keith was the business plan. “Before Summer Company, I would probably not have thought to write one,” he says. “Writing a plan and updating it helps you realize how much effort [your business] will actually take.” Revising the plan became important when Keith’s sales began trailing his forecast.

Once he spotted the problem, he was able to respond. “I sent out numerous brochures along with a typed letter. Later, I followed up with an email.” The efforts paid off when new opportunities showed up, including his regular restaurant gig.

Despite the challenges, Keith’s enthusiasm for entrepreneurship rose over the summer, and he plans to keep his business going through the school year and into the summer of 2009. His advice to other students? “The Summer Company program is a great opportunity and experience, so take advantage of it.”



## “I certainly see entrepreneurship as more than just a possible career choice.”

*Puddle of Fire Productions* operated as a high-definition video production house, managing all aspects of productions from script to screen.

“At first, I planned to target small businesses for commercials,” recalls Victor Cooper, the business’s 25-year-old owner. But securing these clients threatened to take the whole summer and then some. Victor decided to shift his focus to projects like weddings and anniversaries. He knew he’d made the right move when business picked up.

A valuable lesson Victor learned was that, through networking, talking to one person could result in referrals to many and that closing a sale meant offering more than just a video. “Every production house has a camera and a laptop. I needed to sell a relationship the client won’t find anywhere else.”

After one summer, Victor has decided to continue with *Puddle of Fire Productions*. “I certainly see entrepreneurship as more than just a *possible* career choice.”



### Puddle of Fire Productions

**Victor Cooper**  
Belleville

## “When you work for yourself, the results [are] much more personal and tangible.”

Twenty-year-old Katelin Everson built her love for all things equestrian into a business that purchased and trained horses for resale, provided riding lessons and offered contract services to stables in her area.

Early in the summer, Katelin wondered if she’d taken on too much. “I found I didn’t have enough time to ride and advertise my horses and also teach lessons.” Although training and reselling horses had the potential to earn the most revenue, the income from activities like riding lessons was helping Katelin meet her cash flow needs.

Fortunately, her mentor had an idea: by measuring the exact costs of her business, Katelin could calculate how much time to devote to income generation so she wouldn’t run out of cash before selling a horse. Thanks to the analysis, Katelin was able to effectively reallocate her time.

Over the summer, Katelin achieved her goals of earning money doing something she loved and learning more about business. She also discovered a satisfying career option. “When you work for yourself, the results [are] much more personal and tangible. There is also a much greater sense of pride and accomplishment.”



### Everson Horse Training

**Katelin Everson**  
Rockland



## Shred Skateboards

**Colin Fox**  
Meaford

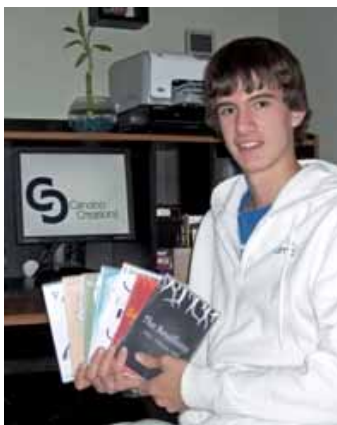
**“The program gave me a reason to get at it sooner rather than later.”**

Colin's vision was to create a business that offered his own line of skateboards and clothing, and also brought boarding enthusiasts together through events. Before Summer Company, “it was merely an idea,” he says. “The program gave me a reason to get at it sooner rather than later.”

To meet the challenge, Colin developed a new sales strategy around competitive pricing and getting his products out to as many skating events as possible. He also took advantage of both skateboarding competitions he hosted himself to promote and sell his products.

Colin ran into a common entrepreneurial problem when the costs of getting his products made were higher than expected. “I realized quickly the way to reduce cost was by ordering quantity,” he recalls. However the large orders he made “called for a major personal investment,” exposing him to more financial risk than he'd foreseen.

Over the summer, the *Shred* brand caught on, strengthening sales and laying a great foundation for years to come. From the business plan, to the training, to working with his mentor, Colin says Summer Company was “very helpful. I would do it again.” His future plans? “I've always been an entrepreneur,” he says. “I plan to keep myself busy.”



## Candoo Creations

**Mitchell Haw**  
Kenora

**“Because Candoo Creations is owned and operated by me, I am able to get to know my customers, unlike many large businesses.”**

“I've always dreamed of running my own business,” says 15 year-old Mitchell Haw, owner of *Candoo Creations*, who adds that it was while applying to Summer Company that he realized he didn't need vast amounts of money and education to do so.

owned and operated by me, I am able to get to know my customers, unlike many large businesses.” The customer service advantage helped Mitchell penetrate his new market, and soon sales were growing.

Mitchell had planned to offer design and printing services to local businesses, but began to realize that summer was not a good selling season for these clients. When he switched his focus to the consumer market, offering services such as photo restoration, video archiving and media conversion, he quickly found he had an edge: “Because Candoo Creations is

Mitchell sustained his momentum by focusing on quality, marketing and being well organized. He also increased the work he could do in-house through some strategic equipment purchases. “I had a lot of fun this summer,” says Mitchell, who plans to run *Candoo Creations* part-time during the school year and full-time again in the summer of 2009.

## “We helped promote sustainability and eating locally.”

Nita Heeg, 23, ‘road-tested’ her interest in sustainable business practices through a summer company that delivered local produce by bicycle.

To transport enough produce to be profitable, Nita created a light-weight, insulated bike trailer. By advertising at farmers’ markets, she reached her summer-long goal of finding 50 clients after only three weeks of operations, proving her theory that, if offered the choice, many people will support a business that’s environmentally friendly.

Over the summer, Nita grew *Local Food Peddlers* by building relationships and through publicity that earned her local media coverage and even an appearance on CTV’s *Canada AM*. But increased sales meant an increased administrative effort, something Nita found challenging.

Overall, Nita’s experience was “amazing. We helped promote sustainability and eating locally. One customer even wrote a poem about how much they personally benefited from our business.” She looks forward to serving her community again in the summer of 2009 through *Local Food Peddlers*.



### Local Food Peddlers

**Nita Heeg**  
Guelph

## “I will be able to use the skills I obtained ... to create work for myself instead of waiting for opportunity to come seek me out.”

Shannon Kearns had always wanted to start her own theatre company, but never dreamed someone would give her money and training to help do it. When she heard about Summer Company, she seized the opportunity.

Shannon’s original plan was to deliver two musical productions over the summer, but she soon realized they wouldn’t generate enough revenue to cover expenses. On the advice of her mentors, she contacted local restaurants, festivals, fairs and even retirement homes, a target market she hadn’t considered. Before

long, bookings came in and revenue became more predictable, since, as Shannon notes, “these smaller performances paid a flat rate regardless of audience attendance.”

Since returning to her music theatre program in the fall, Shannon has continued entertaining local seniors part-time. “I definitely consider entrepreneurship a possible career choice,” she says. “I will be able to use the skills I obtained from Summer Company to create work for myself instead of waiting for opportunity to come seek me out.”



### GoldenMuse Theatre Company

**Shannon Kearns**  
Brockville





## Retral Evolution

**Bradley Keys**  
Exeter

### “I want to continue with entrepreneurship.”

Brad's business, *Retral Evolution*, centred on a leading-edge website that would host multi-player games and charge players a fee to access them. Brad launched the business with the site nearly complete and advertised in places like Google Ads to get a head start.

While his concept offered advantages to game developers and targeted a clear market, Brad soon realized that building a subscriber base and getting game content would take longer than he'd planned. “I was getting behind my cash flow prediction,” he says. “With true entrepreneurial skill,” his program provider recalls,

“he decided to also take on website development.” Brad pursued local businesses and community groups as clients, and his gaming website, which showcased his design talent, was useful for marketing.

By the end of the summer, Brad had exceeded his sales forecast and still managed to make progress on his original idea. “I want to continue with entrepreneurship,” says Brad, who plans to continue with *Retral Evolution* and has also decided to study game design at a leading school. “The program was a huge factor in helping me make that decision.”



## Swimming with Stefanie

**Stefanie Krakovsky**  
Kleinburg

### “I quickly saw that a business owner cannot waste time.”

Certified swimming instructor Stefanie Krakovsky, 17, had thought about starting her own business teaching children to swim before hearing about Summer Company, but feels the program gave her the financing and support she needed to get serious about the idea.

An organized person who is “on top of her game,” according to her program provider, Stefanie still had to sharpen her time-management skills. “I quickly saw that a business owner cannot waste time,” she says. An example was eliminating door-to-door marketing in favour of seeking referrals from existing clients, which gave better results for her

effort. And to reduce time spent chasing payment from clients, Stefanie started phoning parents the night before fees were due, reminding them to have cheques prepared for the next day's lessons. Techniques like these, her service-oriented business model and a lot of hard work all helped Stefanie exceed her sales target for the summer.

Off to study business at university this fall, Stephanie calls Summer Company “an amazing experience.” True to her organized nature, she booked most of her '08 clients for the summer of 2009, when she'll reopen *Swimming with Stefanie*.



## “My summer company is a dream come true.”

For years, fine arts student Joy Lapps, 24, had wanted to start a business based around her love for steel pan. When she heard about Summer Company, she saw the perfect chance to open a steel pan summer school for children.

Start-up costs were considerable, particularly getting instruments for students to use and renting space for the program. Success depended on good marketing. “One of the most difficult aspects was determining which methods were working and which ones I should discard,” she recalls. It turned out

that networking, word of mouth from happy participants and parents, and media exposure provided the most benefit. Joy also discovered her enthusiasm and ease in working with young children were a draw.

By summer’s end, Joy had surpassed her sales and profit goals. She also achieved a secondary goal when interest from the adults in her community was sufficient for her to offer a series of fall and winter workshops. “My summer company is a dream come true,” says Joy. “I thank God for it.”



### The Steel Pan Experience

**Joy Lapps**  
Ajax

## “Being an entrepreneur is not for everyone, but I’m 100% sure it’s for me.”

Marshall Yardworks provided a wide range of landscaping services, including spring cleanup, grass-cutting, aeration, sod installation and watering, fall cleanup and winter protection.

Owner Taylor Marshall, 20, faced a market rife with competitors, and high operating costs meant he needed to book and deliver a lot of work. Fortunately, in the words of his program provider, “Taylor is a very hard worker.” By advertising aggressively and providing dependable services at fair prices, Taylor grew his client base. He used efficiency techniques to increase his productivity, such as

scheduling his day’s work on job-sites that were close together to minimize travel time. And through careful budgeting, he was also able to purchase equipment to boost productivity.

“After countless hours of hard work, my objective is in sight,” said Taylor, at the end of the summer. “Marshall Yardworks maintains approximately 50 residential and 6 commercial properties.” Taylor loved working for himself for lots of reasons, including having his income directly tied to his effort. “Being an entrepreneur is not for everyone, but I’m 100% sure it’s for me.”



### Marshall Yardworks

**Taylor Marshall**  
Sudbury



## Ab-Original Apparel and Custom Sewing

**Deanne Morrison**  
Thunder Bay

### “A great stepping stone to my future.”

Twenty-four-year-old Deanne Morrison set out last summer to produce and sell fancy shawls for pow-wow dancing and retail a line of apparel.

Deanne's first entrepreneurial challenge arose from slow shawl sales and difficulties financing clothing inventory, which caused her to rethink her strategy. “I began custom sewing in order to generate more revenue,” she says. She also created her own line of humorous t-shirts that became “a hit at the pow-wows.”

Before long, the business was back on track, and by summer's end

Deanne had attended 10 pow-wows, custom-sewed seven full regalia costumes and sold over 90 t-shirts. The demand for practice shawls ended up being enough for Deanne to produce 80.

Deanne's first entrepreneurial experience was “a great stepping stone to my future.” In the summer of 2009, she plans to attend even more events and expand her t-shirt business into a clothing line representative of North American aboriginal peoples. The more distant future? “I feel confident I will be following through on this for my career.”



## MirTrans

**Mireille Renaud**  
Kapuskasing

### “Everything, from having to write a business plan to keeping track of activities, was absolutely necessary to successfully operate a business.”

Mireille Renaud, 20, launched her summer company hoping to improve her English/French translation skills, learn about running a business, test the market for her services in Northern Ontario and make some money, of course.

Effective networking helped Mireille find clients who were ready for her. “The work flow was more than I expected,” she says. “I was able to keep busy every week, all week.” The challenge became managing the ups and downs of her workflow, which might require her to work five hours one day, eleven the next. “Falling into a very

strict routine proved the best way of adapting. It also helped with stress management.”

The heavy workload made Mireille thankful for the training she got in the program. “Everything, from having to write a business plan to keeping track of activities, was absolutely necessary to successfully operate a business. They wouldn't have crossed my mind if I'd started my business alone.” Mireille feels she achieved her goals and plans to run her business during the year and in summers to come. Is entrepreneurship a possible career choice? “Absolutely,” she says.

## “Matters that had to be dealt with were my responsibility since it was my business.”

Why would someone planning to work in Toronto's financial sector launch a Summer Company business? Because, says Krista Stonehouse, “to work in investment, you have to be enterprising [and] have a good sense of how businesses are run.”

Krista's business, *Forex Input Research*, offered a service of monitoring and analysing foreign exchange transactions. She had a prospective client lined up when she applied to the program, and her business school background helped during the launch. The going got tougher when the effort of monitoring markets from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. began devouring Krista's

time for administration and answering client questions. “Matters that had to be dealt with were my responsibility since it was my business. I had to improve my time management.” Krista started scheduling her days very carefully and also bought accounting software to save time on book-keeping.

“I gained valuable experience running my own business,” Krista says, looking back, “and also received experience in the foreign exchange market.” After business school, Krista hopes to capitalize by starting another business in the financial sector.



### Forex Input Research

**Krista Stonehouse**  
Sarnia

## “Without Summer Company, the business would have had a great deal of difficulty getting up and running.”

Twenty-four-year-old Joel Warsh, a kinesiology student who aspires to be a doctor, decided to get a head start on his future profession through a website and print design company targeting healthcare clients.

“Without Summer Company, the business would have had a great deal of difficulty getting up and running,” Joel says, noting that his program providers helped him get the local newspaper coverage that generated the first few calls. Fortunately, he had a promotional kit ready to go that showcased his design flair. In June and July, business began flourishing, and

Joel's client list eventually grew to include established entities like the McGill Medical Journal and departments at Queen's University.

Over the summer, Joel surpassed his projected sales goals, booking enough business to operate *International Innovation MD* into the fall. Though he plans to be busy at medical school someday, Joel hopes to “continue the business into the future and continue with the entrepreneurial spirit.” Summer Company was “incredible ... I would recommend it to anyone thinking of starting a business.”



### International Innovation MD

**Joel Warsh**  
Kingston



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