

# Graduates thankful for “life changing” Elevate Plus program

- FEBRUARY 15, 2023 - 7:30 PM
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A life changing program that helps local residents gain confidence to enter the workforce is celebrating eight new graduates.

[Elevate Plus](#) is a four-week government-funded program that prepares unemployed and underemployed people with the skills they need to succeed in the workplace. Eight new graduates of the program walked off the stage at the Pioneer Building at Loyalist College on Wednesday into entry-level jobs at JBS Foods in Belleville. Graduates include: Daniel Galpin, Rorrie MacDonald, Robert McBride, Logan McCoy, Nicholas Payne, Curtis Peddlesden, Colleen Wager and Brad Warford.

"This month has changed my life in ways my past self wouldn't believe," one graduate said in a testimonial. "This has brought out the best version of my self. It's been hard but this program has really boosted me up."

Another graduate said they were thankful for the program and JBS Foods for the job.

"I have overcome a lot of trauma in my life and I was on that downward slope when I came across Elevate Plus on the radio," they said. "I wasn't quite sure what was going to be going on in class but once I got in I thought this is an awesome program, it should be everywhere."

Another graduate also expressed how they too had been "struggling with alot" their whole life before entering Elevate Plus.

"I wasn't in the right place and my Mom heard about this on the radio and when I met Neil I knew he was the guy," they said. "He helped me, he helped us."



Eight new graduates of the Elevate Plus program walked off the stage at the Pioneer Building at Loyalist College on Wednesday into entry-level jobs at JBS Foods in Belleville. Photo: submitted.

Neil Dick is the program coordinator at the Loyalist College Training and Knowledge Centre. Elevate Plus helps people develop confidence, learn soft skills, food safety and manufacturing concepts.

The program is offered to all ages, demographics and all walks of life. Since the program's inception in 2014, over 330 have received training and 75 per cent of them are still employed or run their own business.

"The transition people go through in this program is huge," said Mike Hewitt, Manufacturing Resource Centre Coordinator at the Quinte Economic Development Commission. "This has had a huge impact on people's lives. It has given them the confidence to go out into the workforce."

The workforce is a huge issue across all sectors and Hewitt said he is hearing from employers that they need people to show up and contribute.

"We have helped people on Ontario Works, folks in their 60s who need experience and individuals coming out of incarceration," Hewitt said. "We are trying to take folks facing barriers from entering the workforce to gain employment. Having that advocate is important and believing in yourself."

Participants also build strong bonds with one another while in the program.

"It's akin to summer camp," he explained. "The bond between cohorts is strong...Some people just need a bit of a hand and a little bit of help."