

## GT Hiring Solutions Graduates North Islanders to New Careers Has Helped over 2,894 North Island Residents from Income Assistance

**Courtenay, August 11, 2004:** Today, GT Hiring Solutions graduated another 20 North Islanders from income assistance to the workforce with job-ready skills they'll need to succeed in British Columbia's booming construction industry.

They're just a handful of the 20,000 British Columbians the Council of Tourism Associations of BC (COTA), Canadian Home Builders' Association of BC (CHBA-BC) and GT Hiring Solutions has helped move from income assistance to meaningful employment through its Destinations and Hard Hats employment services.

"It's like a new beginning," said Alan Currie, a Hard Hats Courtenay graduate and one of two recipients of a \$300 GTHS training scholarship. "My life has changed for the better because I've been given a positive outlook and the tools to find a job in the construction industry. Now I can make a good living for myself and my girls."

Cleo Fort, GTHS's second scholarship recipient, assisted by the tourism specialists at Destinations is currently working as a Booking Agent with Avia West Resorts. This award will assist her in reaching her ultimate goal of becoming an ESL teacher.

"We're very proud of all our clients, but even after they've found employment, we're far from through with them," said Christine Stoneman, Chief Operating Officer for GT Hiring Solutions. "We keep working with them for up to 19 months after they've been hired to give them the support they need to overcome any challenges they may face."

"Premier Gordon Campbell has said British Columbia's future will be built on our ability to provide the resources and the tools people need to progress," said Stan Hagen, Minister of Human Resources and MLA for Comox Valley. "That's why this government is investing in programs like Destinations and Hard Hats, to give income assistance clients the opportunity to enter the workplace and build a better future."

"Tourism directly employs 117,500 British Columbians and over the next seven years, tourism alone will need to fill another 50,000 positions," said Mary Mahon Jones, CEO of the Council of Tourism Associations of BC, a leading partner in Destinations. "That means there is tremendous opportunity for all British Columbians currently on income assistance."

"The construction industry in the Comox Valley is booming and there is a need for entry level labourers who have Safety, WHMIS and first aid training," said M.J. Whitemarsh, CEO of CHBA-BC. Whitemarsh went on to say, "It is our hope that these HardHats graduates will go on to pursue apprenticeships in industry led programs like the new Residential Framing Technician Credential."

Hard Hats provides people on income assistance with training for entry-level trades positions in the construction industry. The program was designed and developed with industry consultation and is a stepping-stone for individuals interested in pursuing trade apprenticeship.

Destinations is BC's first choice for jobs in tourism. With 28 offices throughout the province, Destinations is the British Columbia's largest placement organization for the tourism industry.

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