



Discovering the World of Water through Dual Credit Programming

The majority of us take for granted that clean, potable water flows from the taps in our homes. Glenmary high school student McKenna Patterson knows what goes into making this occur, thanks to her participation in the Northern Lakes College Water and Wastewater Operator Preparation Level 1 program through Dual Credit programming. "Water, as a resource, is not appreciated enough. Often people don't know how it is getting to their house," she observes. Not only are consumers often unaware of the cycle of water treatment, but also about their daily and monthly usage. McKenna continues, "The checks and balances that go into making sure drinking water is safe for the public are unbelievable. I did not expect there would be so much protocol to be sure water is safe to drink."

McKenna's knowledge speaks to the value of participating in Dual Credit programming, where students gain high school and post-secondary credit at the same time. McKenna completed the Water and Wastewater Operator Preparation Level 1 program while in eleventh grade. Passion for the environment sparked her interest in the program. She feels that treating water goes hand in hand with her environmental interests. McKenna's ultimate goal is to work as an Environmental Consultant and she knows her knowledge and experience with water and wastewater operations will help her succeed in that field.

McKenna worked at the Grimshaw Water Treatment Plant during the summer of 2018. During that time, she learned how the entire system works, from water to wastewater treatment. McKenna worked with Regional Water Manager Derrel Johnson in water and wastewater treatment and conducting water infrastructure upgrades. Of his experience working with McKenna, Johnson comments, "I would hire her today if I could. McKenna will make an excellent operator. I will be happy to have her back for Work Experience."

The hours she accrued during the summer of 2018 will apply towards the practical hour requirement for operator certification. She will be returning to work at the plant in February 2019 to do Work Experience for high school credit and gain further practical hours. Once she has all of her hours and graduates from twelfth grade, she will write her level 1 provincial exam, becoming a certified operator. She intends to complete the NLC Water Treatment and Water Distribution Operator Level 2 program in short order. This will allow her to reach her goal of one day managing a water plant.

"McKenna is a very mature young lady. She approached me about participating in the Water and Wastewater program on her own. Though the school finds placements for students, she even found her own placement for her summer internship. Based on her evaluations, she did an excellent job, all while maintaining good grades in her other high school classes. The future is bright for McKenna," comments Scott Randall, Off-Campus Coordinator for the Holy Family Catholic Regional Division.