

Katherine.

Remote Work Supports a Dream Career

Katherine Gallagher, from Peterborough, Ontario, says that being on the autism spectrum eliminated so many of the traditional employment options for her. At the same time, she recognized that the solution may be in remote work. She searched for remote opportunities on her own, but couldn't find legitimate work-from-home employment options that were a fit.

"I couldn't find legitimate remote opportunities that were meaningful or appropriate, fulfilling, and sustaining for me," Katherine explains.

Back in her early twenties, Katherine dreamed of finding a job she would enjoy. She suffered from being overwhelmed by busy, noisy environments and common social interactions. Discouragement set in early because she was seldom called for an interview. When she was shortlisted and did find a job, the work environment was too busy and distracting for her—even when the employer provided workplace accommodations.

This pattern continued for another 12 years until 2014, when at the age of 34, she was diagnosed with high-functioning autism. Katherine finally had an explanation for her learning disabilities.

Katherine joined a social group for autistic adults



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to gain a better understanding of autism. She enjoyed sharing details about her experiences living with autism and realized her presentations gave people with autism a voice. In 2018, when Katherine received the David Conforti Award for her volunteer work with Autism Ontario, she recalls, "I felt recognized and that my work had been validated." Even with this recognition, her struggles to find a job did not end.



“I never felt left behind or unacknowledged, and I felt even more supported (by the program staff) because of my disability. The ongoing level of commitment and service to their clients made me feel optimistic and supported [sic] and that somehow things would come together for me,” recalls Katherine.

In 2019 Katherine completed the introductory and advanced Applied Web Development and Design certificate program, and in March 2020, she completed the self-employment program with her confidence high. With her new IT skills training, Katherine attained a firm foundation to build her career remotely from home.

Through the support of her business advisor at Make A Change Canada, Katherine started

“Even though I was experiencing great success in my volunteer work, my struggle to find paid employment continued,” says Katherine. The job search programs she attended at that time required participants to attend workshops in person.

“I felt exhausted and in a state of information overload,” she explains. Katherine also felt pressured to accept employment offers that did not interest her and weren’t a good fit. Overall, Katherine felt unsupported and heartbroken.

“In 2018, while researching options for employment and training for people with disabilities, I found Make A Change Canada through a web search,” explains Katherine. She immediately enrolled for services through Make A Change Canada’s Tech Diversity Online program, and started the program in the same month.

Katherine says she felt hopeful for the future and well supported due to the high level of support she received while in Make A Change Canada’s flexible and online career services program.

“**Working from home over the past year has proven to me that you can succeed—you just need the right connections and resources to make it work.**”

Spectrum Expressions (www.spectrumexpressions.com). While operating her business, she continued to search for legitimate remote work opportunities. Katherine was thrilled to participate when the opportunity in Make A Change Canada’s Tech Diversity Online program became available in early 2021.

Katherine appreciates the supports from Make A Change Canada’s program staff that includes the necessary equipment she needed to work remotely from home. She soon secured a research position as a remote work experience placement with Incipio Modo (www.incipiomodo.com), which is an award-winning sculptor/artist team from Calgary, Alberta.

Her employment specialist followed up on a regular basis with Katherine throughout, from preparing for the job interview to the hiring stage. She went into the interview feeling confident, prepared, and supported.

“Last year, when I was a client of the Tech Diversity Online program, I encountered an employment opportunity through their job postings (with Incipio Modo), which I became very excited about,” explains Katherine. “I was extremely satisfied and compelled by their enthusiasm for the recommendations that I made. I offered my research assistance to help them market their business and promote the visibility of their brand online,” says Katherine.

“**Their trust in me has given me the extra drive and confidence when at times I knew that traditional workplaces might not be the right direction for me.**”

She goes on to explain that they were so thrilled with her detailed reports and spreadsheets, as well as the enjoyment of working together, that they remained in touch long after her role ended in May 2021.

After the successful completion of this role, and with the valuable recent work experience added to her resume, Katherine was able to secure a remote and permanent marketing position with another organization.

“I presently work from home in marketing research for a large company. I’m thrilled with the contribution I make to the field, and I’m told repeatedly that I have a polite, courteous manner, which I feel makes a big impact in marketing,” Katherine says with pride.

“I look forward to every shift, knowing that I will uncover insights into the buying habits and motivations that people have regarding the purchases they make on products or services,” she says. “It’s an exciting world to work in marketing because of the innovations in technology and that the internet provides a larger buying marketplace.”

Katherine thanks the team at Make A Change Canada for their “welcoming supportive attitude” towards her independent job search goals.

“Their trust in me has given me the extra drive and confidence when at times I knew that traditional workplaces might not be the right direction for me,” adds Katherine. “Working from home over the past year has proven to me that you can succeed—you just need the right connections and resources to make it work.”

HELPING CANADIANS FROM COAST TO COAST REALIZE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL



Make A Change Canada/Faire un Changement Canada
Anne-Marie Edgar, CEO
E: amedgar@makeachangecanada.com
D: (250) 352-1378 | TF: 1-888-9-ASPIRE x700
www.makeachangecanada.com

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