

# Lausanne Ham

## Community Success Story

By the time Lausanne Ham of Maple Ridge had graduated from the Resident Care Attendant program at Vancouver Career College, prospective employers were lined up waiting to offer her a job. “Everyone was fighting over her,” recalls Employment Counsellor Julie Harkness of Bowman Employment, who worked with Lausanne to get her ready for the job market.

A conversation with Lausanne quickly determines why this is so. An energetic and positive woman, she and her family fled to Turkey from Iraq when she was just 18. Fluent in Arabic and Kurdish, as well as English, she had worked as an interpreter for many organizations including the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. Her empathetic nature stems directly from the experience she had working with refugees in Turkey. A refugee herself, she nonetheless helped others during a very difficult time.

Lausanne, who has two sons, aged four and six, continued her volunteer work when she came to Canada about a year and a half ago. She has worked as an interpreter for immigrant women who have been abused and are in the court system as well as the CNIB and Kurdish radio.

When it came time for her to look for paid work, she found she needed a hand to get started. “I felt a bit lost,” she said. “I needed to find out what I wanted to do, and what I’m good at.”

She heard about Bowman Employment from a friend, and she knew she had come to the right place when she met with Employment Counsellor Julie Harkness.

“As soon as I went there, a lot of doors opened up.”

She first took a Career Decision Making course at Douglas College and also had an evaluation for her English skills through MOSAIC. She did very well at both courses and found her love of people made her a natural fit for the Resident Care Attendant program.

Lausanne graduated from the program on May 31, 2008 and the job offers poured in. She had her first job on June 4, the second job offer came a few days afterward and she is now on call to four care homes. Her hours have built to the level now where she may only work at two care homes.

“I love working with older people – I don’t want to do anything else,” she says. “I leave every day with a smile on my face.”

It’s safe to say the people she leaves behind every day are smiling, too.

