

Employment Opportunity Opens New Doors on the Downtown Eastside



saveonmeats.ca



“It’s nice to have employment that’s steady and dependable.” – Randy

Photo: Brad and Randy lean on a wall inside of Save On Meats.

Save On Meats is a local diner with a rich-history in Vancouver’s downtown eastside district. With the support of an organization called Open Door Group, they’ve been able to provide meaningful job opportunities to longtime friends Brad and Randy who used to live in poverty and previously faced barriers to employment.

Brad and Randy have been good friends for over ten years and are almost inseparable. They met on Randy’s forty-third birthday in Calgary and decided to move to Vancouver to be closer to family. When first arriving in 2011, they both struggled to find steady employment and had no other choice but to sleep in their car or shelters.

A year later, they were on welfare and living in a hotel. Brad learned about an organization called Open Door Group (ODG), a non-profit whose mission is to open doors and create career success for individuals facing barriers to employment. One of ODG’s employer partners, Save On Meats, is a local diner with a rich-history in Vancouver’s downtown eastside district. Brad had culinary experience, so the Open Door Group supported him through the hiring process at Save On Meats, and he landed a job as a dishwasher.



Randy too had experience working in a kitchen, but as someone who identifies as having a disability, he was finding it even more difficult to find steady a culinary job in Vancouver. In fact, Randy isn't alone, Statistics Canada reports that [individuals living with a disability in Canada are twice as likely to be living in poverty as people without disabilities](#)¹. Randy was determined not to be another statistic, so after a year and a half of seeing Brad excel at Save On Meats and getting to know the staff, he joined the team as a dishwasher, alongside Brad.

Both men quickly became an integral part of the team, supporting the meal program and back of house. Brad worked his way up from being a dishwasher and now preps and cooks over 750 meals per day for Save On Meats' Single Room Occupancy (SRO) partners, and proudly serves individuals in the homeless community he was once a part of. He also happens to make "*the best damn waffles in Vancouver*" according to Ash MacLeod, Save On Meats' Director of Operations.

Today, Brad and Randy are no longer on welfare, they live independently and have been employed full-time by Save on Meats for a collective 9 years. When asked about their employment journey, Brad said:

"Save On Meats is like family to me...it's nice serving meals to people too."

Randy added:

"It's nice to have employment that's steady and dependable."

The management team at Save On Meats couldn't agree more, that's why in addition to working with Open Door Group, they've created what they call a "barrier-free employee hiring program" and are currently working with over 20 community placement agencies including YMCA – Youth Skills at Work program, Ready, Willing and Able through the Pacific Autism Family Centre, Disabilities Association of Vancouver and BC Partners in Workforce Innovation to name a few.

Through this program and many others, Save On Meats looks forward to opening their doors to anyone who is dedicated, willing to put in the time and looking for an opportunity to showcase their talents.

Link References:

¹ Statistics Canada (2018) *Insights on Canadian Society: Low income among persons with a disability in Canada*. Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2017001/article/54854-eng.htm>