

# @Work

LETHBRIDGE

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MAGAZINE

## **7 Building a Brighter Future Through Apprenticeships**

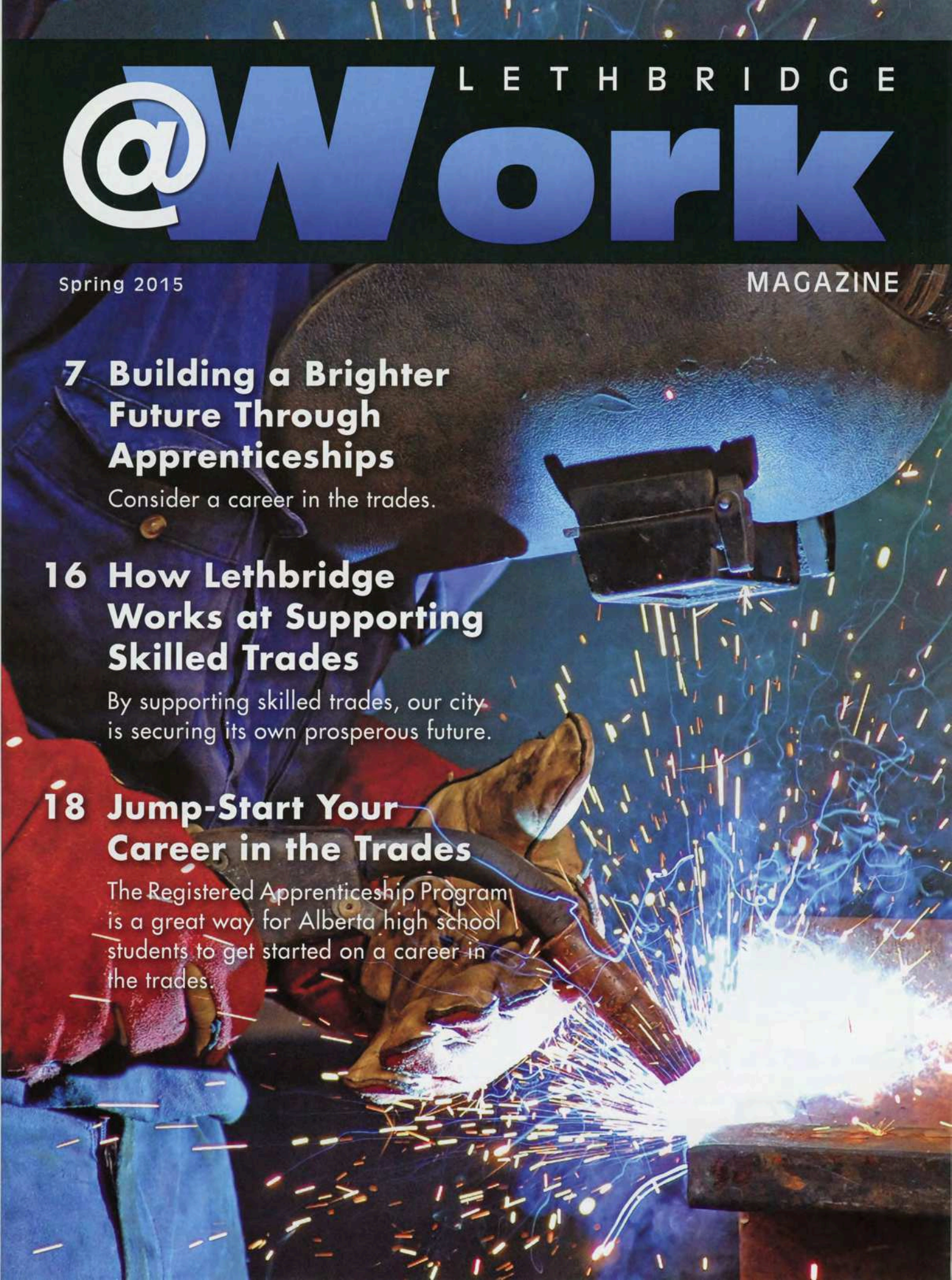
Consider a career in the trades.

## **16 How Lethbridge Works at Supporting Skilled Trades**

By supporting skilled trades, our city is securing its own prosperous future.

## **18 Jump-Start Your Career in the Trades**

The Registered Apprenticeship Program is a great way for Alberta high school students to get started on a career in the trades.





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**SOUTHLAND**  
**1985 30 YEARS 2015**

# SOUTHLAND INTERNATIONAL TRUCKS LTD.: Helping Students Find Their Passion

**Understanding the need to find local, talented, and dedicated young people to join his team, George Kirkham, Southland International Trucks Ltd., puts students in the Registered Apprenticeship Program to work for his business.**

A diversified dealership with a highly trained team of employees has created 30 years of success for Southland International Trucks Ltd. In a prime location, just off of 43rd St. N., Southland occupies 27 acres, making it the largest shop and yard of any dealership in Southern Alberta. The company sells close to 400 new and used trucks and trailers and rents over 150 of such units each year. President George Kirkham notes, "We rent what we sell because it gives our customers a chance to try before they buy." Southland, the longest running dealership in Southern Alberta, is the dealership for International Trucks, Doepker Trailers, and Renn Trailers. It provides full service for trucks and trailers, specializing in Cat and Cummins engine warranty and service. There is also a parts department that not only serves Southland trucks but also other makes and models.

Such a comprehensive business requires 55 highly skilled employees. Between the parts and service departments there are eight to ten apprentices employed at any given time. George understands the need to find local, talented, and dedicated young people who want to join the company's successful model. He says, "Using the Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) has enabled us to find students who start off at the bottom skill level and teach them the trade from the ground up. We can mold them into the way we operate." This model has been very successful for Southland in the 15 years it has

participated in the RAP (there was only one year when a RAP student was not employed). There has been a 70 per cent success rate of employees staying on track and completing not only their high school but their apprenticeship training as well.

Starting on the bottom can mean painting trailers, scraping fifth wheels, changing tires, pressure washing semis, or sorting parts. All of

*"We are very proud that we were able to donate \$100,000.00 to the Lethbridge College. Money we provided will be going to the new trades and technology building, and a once-a-year parts apprenticeship scholarship."*

these job descriptions teach a young worker to be safe, to follow directions, to work precisely, and to learn the trade. Two Southland employees who participated in the RAP and are now important employees are Teraneal Ober and Shelby Kirkham. Teraneal experienced the common panic of Grade 12 students: graduation looming and not knowing what career path to follow. It was the direction of a teacher that put her in contact with Shane McKay of CAREERS: The Next Generation who arranged





RAP Heavy Equipment Technician Kyle Millband, Lethbridge School District No. 51; Kole Tuttle, Fleet Maintenance Technician; and President, Southland International Trucks Ltd., George Kirkham.

## What Southland Looks For In Employees:

- Mechanically inclined
- Punctual
- Consistent attendance
- Works well as part of a team
- A strong desire to learn
- Driver's licence

her first interview at Southland. She secured a job as an apprentice parts technician and she was able to create a flexible high school schedule to enable her to work as much as possible, earning high school credits and acquiring hours towards her first year apprenticeship. Now, one year later, she has completed her first year partsman apprenticeship and credits her success to the RAP: "Transitioning from high school to work is normally a hard move for teenagers, but with the help of the RAP I was able to

quickly jump into a full time job and be happy with where I was working and what I was doing. I now have a career path in an industry I love, and I attend college as part of the apprenticeship for Parts Technician. I never believed that I would be able to attend college until I started as a RAP student, and now here I am."

Shelby, while in Grade 9, was encouraged by her father to consider an apprenticeship route. She realized that learning not only takes place in the classroom, but that it was at the job site as an apprentice partsman that she could apply the math, science, and English skills she learned at school. Sitting in a classroom desk was not her strength, but helping a customer find the right set of lights for his semi or learning what size camshaft is required for the Cummins engine, was her passion. She could be active, communicate, develop important organization skills, and plan ahead. Shelby credits her success to the RAP: "The program didn't just get me out of high school with a diploma and a job I loved, it gave me the opportunity to walk into a dealership and grow into a knowledgeable employee that now has such a great opportunity to learn different things outside the trade I chose." Shelby has been working in the truck industry for four years now and has used her skills to move up into the social media and marketing department of the dealership.

George has one final piece of advice for young people who are interested in the trades: "Take any shop classes that are available to you, business classes, time management, communication skills, etc. to prepare yourself for the trades; and talk to your school's off campus education facilitator or coordinator for important help and direction."