

Student picks up skills as a writer

By **PAT LEE**
Staff Reporter

Lawrence Pickrem's future looks bright.

He's about to graduate with top marks from Citadel High and he's headed to Dalhousie University in the fall with an eye to becoming a lawyer.



Lawrence Pickrem
(PAT LEE / Community Herald)

But he can also pat himself on the back for being the first student to earn a co-op class credit for writing for a newsletter produced by youth in care.

Lawrence, who left home at 16 to live at Phoenix House and is now living in a supervised apartment, worked on *The Voice of the Future* for two years in order to meet the co-op program criteria, something he said has helped him prepare for the future.

"I took away better communications skills and I find it easier to relate to people who are in my situation," Pickrem, 18, said. "It helps me feel not so alone."

The Grade 12 student was one of 15 who worked on the Youth in Care Newsletter Project, a 30-session program for teens in HRM who are receiving services from the Department of Community services through child welfare or income assistance.

In order to meet high school's criteria for the co-op program, he had to do 100 hours of unpaid work on the newsletter as well as complete 25 hours of classroom time. He started accumulating his hours while a student at St. Patrick's High School last year.

Andrew Safer, the newsletter's director, said many of the kids working on the newsletter face significant challenges in their lives so it's hard for them to always be consistent with the program.

But he said he couldn't have asked for anything more from Pickrem.

"Lawrence — attendance-wise, participation-wise and leadership-wise — he's a model student," Safer said. "He's got such an impressive body of work."

Trevor Doyle, co-ordinator of the co-op program at Citadel High, also had nothing but praise for Pickrem's work.

"We see all kinds of students here with all kinds of challenges, but it's always impressive when students meet those challenges and exceed all expectations," he said. Doyle said about 60 students completed the co-op program at the school this year. Teens working on the 20-page newsletter, a project of the Youth Voices of Nova Scotia Society, met once a week for two hours and the finished product was distributed at the end of each session.

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