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Summer job educates public about headrests

Rest Up! Save Your Neck developed by Insurance Bureau of Canada

BY SHAWNA FRYER
SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

Summer has finally arrived. Birds are singing, flowers are blooming, and students everywhere are trading their sweats for suits.

Many university and college students are heading off to Cubicleland for the summer, pulling files instead of all-nighters while visions of fall's tuition fees dance in their heads. Not so for Dundas resident Jacob Cowling, one of 16 students who is spending his vacation working at exciting events such as the Molson Indy Motorfest and the Midland Waterfest.

Jacob was selected from over 300 candidates to work for Insurance Bureau of Canada's community outreach program Rest Up! Save Your Neck. The program aims to educate the public about proper vehicle headrest adjustment. It was designed by IBC, the auto insurers' trade association, in response to research that found that only 14 per cent of drivers and 19 per cent of passengers had their headrests in proper position. In a group with three other university students, Jacob is traveling to summer festivals, small-town main streets and shopping malls to spread this important safety message.

Born and raised in Hamilton, Jacob

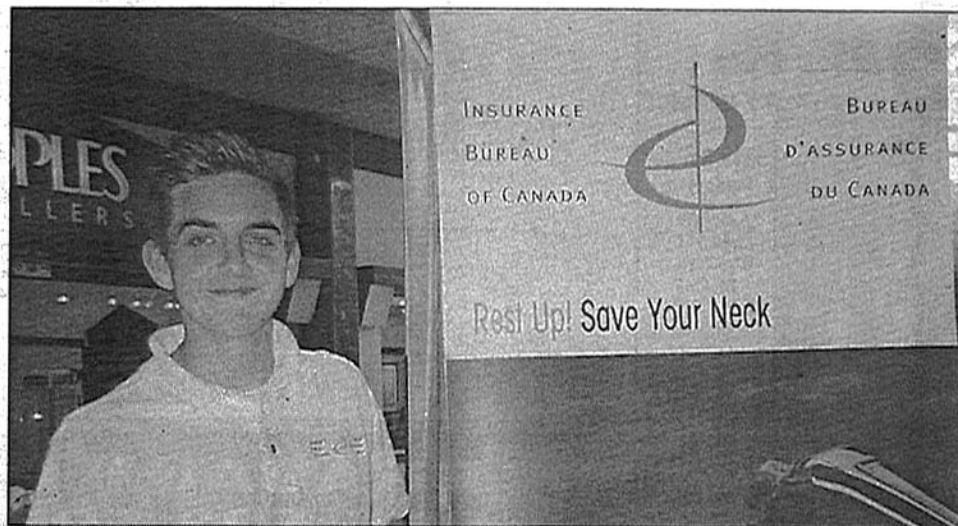
moved to Dundas when he was in Grade 9. After high school, he packed up and moved to the University of Ottawa where he is currently studying history and communications.

"I hope to eventually be working in a high school teaching position or somewhere out in the public relations world," said Jacob.

"I applied for this job for two main reasons. The first and most obvious is that I wanted some experience in the PR world. I wanted a first-person description of what that line of work entailed. Secondly, I love my country to pieces! I am very proud to be Canadian, and I was very excited about this job because not only would I be able to see the beautiful sites this land has to offer, but I am able — through this job — to help protect my fellow countrymen."

Jacob protects people by teaching them how to properly adjust the headrests in their vehicles. A headrest is properly aligned when it is level with the top of the head and at a distance of five to ten centimeters from the back of the head. Half of drivers have their headrests in positions that won't protect them from injury in a rear-end collision. Rear-end collisions account for 80% of all whiplash-related injuries.

"Whiplash and other related injuries can hurt anyone," says Stan Griffin, president and CEO of IBC. "These injuries are painful for auto accident victims and can end up being costly for insurance policyholders."



Jacob Cowling is one of 16 students who is spending his vacation working at events such as the Molson Indy Motorfest and the Midland Waterfest to to educate the public about proper vehicle headrest adjustment.

Insurance companies spend approximately \$4 billion each year on car accident claims resulting from injuries that don't involve bones or organs, such as whiplash. These claims are a major contributor to rising insurance premiums.

Jacob and his coworkers will spend the next two months sharing this and other important messages before heading back to their studies.

"So far the job has been superb. I enjoy being able to teach people about the campaign and then seeing the satisfaction in

their newfound knowledge," said Jacob. "I enjoy discovering parts of Ontario I've never been to. Most of all, I love the friendships I've made with my team members. Together, we are making this campaign a fun, healthy, productive, and very beneficial working experience."

Communicating effectively and working in a team environment are just a couple of the skills Jacob and his team will hone this summer. — skills that will be invaluable in their studies and future jobs. Skills that might just one day save their necks.