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Transgender job fair will help with barriers - from interviews to LinkedIn photos

'The initial thing is like, 'are people going to make fun of me when I go in?''

By Samantha Craggs, CBC News

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[[Photo](#): Karl Andrus, right, is organizing the Open Doors Job Fair, aimed at helping Hamiltonians who are transgender and gender non-conforming find work. Autumn Getty, a local trans rights activist, is advising him.]



Autumn Getty, award-winning poet and transgender rights activist, is no stranger to being underemployed.

Getty has published two books of poetry, and been nominated for the Premier's Award for Excellence in the Arts. She's facilitated support groups, given eloquent speeches in city council chambers, and co-edits *The Claremont Review*.

She's also out of work.

A lot of financially successful people are transgender, Getty says. Some of them are Hamiltonians. But for many trans people, even the fear of judgment at a job interview is daunting, especially if they're early in their transitions. And the simple task of giving references means outing one's self as trans.

"The initial thing is like, 'are people going to make fun of me when I go in?'" she said. "When you send in the resume, are you going to have to tell them that you're transgender so they're not shocked when you show up and it negatively affects the interview?"

Questions like this are why Hamilton resident Karl Andrus has organized the [Open Doors Job Fair](#), a Feb. 5 event designed to help people who are transgender or gender non-conforming in their job searches. Getty is assisting.

There'll be a makeup artist and access to some job interview-ready clothes. People will get resume help, and a professional photographer will take photos for LinkedIn profiles. Trans-friendly employers will be there too, including the City of Hamilton, Good Shepherd, Carmen's and Mohawk College.

The project began when Andrus took a community engagement course through City School by Mohawk. Tasked with organizing a community event, Andrus thought of his trans friend who went from a high-end programming job to working in retail.

The job fair, he said, is about helping people eliminate barriers. If they need bus tickets, he has them. If they need resume help, someone will be there.

Getty, who facilitates a trans peer support group, gave him advice. She has lived experience.

Getty left her last full-time job at a factory because using the change room there became untenable. Since then, she's spoken in front of high school students about writing. She does public poetry readings. But job interviews are nerve wracking.

[[Photo](#): Autumn Getty, shown here in 2016, has led teen writing groups and given presentations about deeply personal issues. But job interviews are daunting.]



"Obviously when you're applying for a job, there's an element of insecurity because you're in that role of asking for something and having to prove yourself to an interviewer," Getty said.

"I feel like with trans people ... there's an added anxiety about whether the employer is really open to hiring transgender people."

One day, Getty said, she'd like to work in social services and community engagement. In the meantime, she's getting unpaid experience that includes work with PFLAG and sitting on the city's LGBTQ advisory committee.

PATH Employment helped with the job fair, and hopes to take it over and make it annual, said Tara Aronson, manager of employment services. PATH sees many transgender clients who have trouble finding employment.

These employers, Aronson said, will meet job hunters face to face.

"They'll see their skills and experience, and the abilities they have."

The event is at NGen Youth Centre from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/transgender-job-fair-1.4515566>