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## Off on a good foot

Article

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Jon Gauthier, here with partner Melissa McNeil and his sister, Kirsten, finds social media and an iPhone are invaluable in running a unique courier service.

COLIN MCCONNELL/TORONTO STAR

Jayme Poisson  
Staff Reporter

Jon Gauthier knows the TTC like the back of his hand. If he needs directions around Toronto he taps the coordinates into his iPhone.

For the past six months, the friendly, tech-savvy Sudbury native has been trekking all over the city, delivering packages for his not-for-profit startup, GoodFoot Delivery — an environmentally friendly courier company that employs people with developmental disabilities.

It's a novel idea and one that has the potential to make a big impact in the city's downtown core.

A few minutes spent in GoodFoot's Queen West headquarters is all it takes to realize that Gauthier, who has battled learning disabilities his whole life, is delivering a lot more than office correspondence.

"You go into places you'd never actually go," he says of his forays into the city's MuchMusic and Virgin buildings. "It's cool that I get to be in major corporations."

It all started last year, when Gauthier was going through a rough spot.

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It costs the city about \$3.7 million a year to clear just the end of resident's driveways in North York, Scarborough and Etobicoke. What would you do with the service?

- Keep the current arrangement
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“I’m still struggling with development issues and I couldn’t get a full-time job anywhere. No one was hiring me,” he says earnestly.

While he receives some income from the Ontario Disability Support Program, it wasn’t enough to live on. “It

was a bit of a tough time for me,” he adds.

Concerned, his sister, Kirsten, wanted to help Gauthier get back on his feet. She had some extra space in the back of her graphic design office and wanted the chance to be part of something that would give back as well.

In January of this year, GoodFoot was born.

The couriers do all their deliveries by hand, taking the TTC and, as the name suggests, travelling on foot. Prices are competitive, just like any other service in the city. Direct, 60 to 90 minutes, costs \$10. Costs vary depending on where you’re going and how fast you’d like it to get there.

Gauthier is in charge of training. He helps the other couriers — currently there are three — get their bearings around the city. He teaches them how to speak with clients. And, if they’re ever lost (which isn’t often), he’s always available to lend a hand, or a quick glance at his Google maps.

“I like to impart that knowledge. I say ‘OK, you should know the TTC a little bit and which routes should be most effective,’” he says.

Companies like Virgin and Wind Mobile are currently on their roster.

Erica Faltous, public relations manager for Virgin Mobile, is a big fan of GoodFoot. “I think it comes down to the capabilities of who you’re working with, and we have complete faith in the couriers.”

And Gauthier is a likeable guy. “I like meeting people and creating relationships. I’ve always been entrepreneurial,” he says.

He is also an ace with social media. With over 1,000 twitter followers and counting, the outgoing 36-year-old — although his “stage” age is between 28 and 30 — practically tweets in his sleep.

GoodFoot is currently in the running for a [Pepsi Refresh grant](#). Based on online votes from Canadians, the corporation will award \$25,000 next month to the top two nominees.

When Gauthier tweeted his followers asking them to vote, GoodFoot went from 32nd place to 17th in just 24 hours.

“The social media aspect of it. And the blogging part of it. That’s my forte,” says Gauthier.

Ask him where he sees the non-profit going, and he’ll tell you about his dreams for growing it. He would like to see a whole fleet of GoodFoot couriers. But he’d only change one thing: the black t-shirts that have become their uniform. “They’ve been really hot this summer,” he says with a laugh.

It hasn’t been easy getting the ball rolling, but Gauthier is finally hitting his stride.

“It feels good to help others with a disability. I get the sense of knowing I’m helping people who are not as privileged to get a full-time job and helping to bring them into the fold,” he said. “That’s important.”

*Do you know a Dreamer and Doer? Email: [vlu@thestar.ca](mailto:vlu@thestar.ca)*

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