



**A**t the age of 23, working as a hairstylist at Eliane Hair and Spa in Point Grey, Jennifer Kelly is way ahead of the game.

While many of her peers are just figuring out what direction they'll take in life, Jennifer is well ensconced in a rewarding career that she is passionate about, a career that keeps offering new and exciting opportunities.

Jennifer launched her career in Grade 12 when she attended Vancouver School Board's Youth TRAIN in Trades Hairstylist program at Vancouver Technical Secondary, graduating in 2010 with her Dogwood and her first-year post-secondary training.

Jennifer always enjoyed doing hair and makeup but, until she found the Youth TRAIN in Trades program, she didn't know it could actually be a career.

When she was in the regular high school program, it was a struggle to understand the practical applications of what she was learning - she was looking for a place she could use her hands-on, practical skills in a creative way.

The Youth TRAIN in Trades program provided the space to use her creative energy in a field she has learned to love and her teacher challenged her by setting high standards. When she first applied to the program, her teacher was not impressed with her grades - this motivated her to upgrade her marks so that she could enter the program. "That teacher forced me to grow - she put me outside my comfort zone," Jennifer said. "But it challenged me and gave me a healthy environment to grow in."

Five years out of the program, at the age of 23, Jennifer is fully immersed in her profession and is looking for ways to give back.

As an apprenticeship-mentor at her salon, she provides guidance to up-and-coming hair stylists, and she often sees her younger self in them. "It's nice to give back to kids who are similar to me," she explained. "I see myself in a lot of them. I don't know what I would have done without the program."

She is also trained as an educator and wants to be licensed to teach at every level of her field. In addition, she's tasked with visual merchandising and business benchmarking at Eliane. Jennifer works long days and she describes her job as physically, technically and emotionally demanding - but she's doing what she loves and having an impact on people's lives.

Anyone interested in the hair stylist Youth TRAIN in Trades program should reach out to their school counsellors to find out how to apply, Jennifer explains, but they should also go to a salon and shadow a hair stylist to see if it's the type of work you'd like to do.

For more information about the Youth TRAIN in Trades Hairstylist program, go to <https://bit.ly/2QxziNv>

**Written: Maria Rantanen Photo: Norico Tidball**

