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PEER ENTREPRENEUR GAINS REAL-WORLD EXPERIENCE

December 12, 2012 by Sue Reeves

Tina Porter models some of her handmade items.

About five years ago, Tina Porter began making handcrafted necklaces, earrings, bracelets and hairpieces as gifts for family and friends. Recently, the 20-year-old PEER student from Cornish began selling her handmade creations.

The items, which range in price from $1-2, were sold at The Valley Outlet in Nibley. Owner Laura Wolford also is the parent of a student with special needs who was enrolled in the PEER program. The group was talking about their interests one day, and the topic turned toward the sale of handmade items.

“We said, ‘let’s give it a try,’” Wolford said. She asked Porter to do several tasks to get ready to sell her items, including making a list of wholesale and retail prices.

“It was a fun idea of how I could help her,” Wolford said. “I think it was successful.”

Porter figures she’s made about 50 pieces so far. She decided to offer them for sale, she said, because “I wanted to get some money, to see how business works, to see how it feels.”

A selection of Tina’s bracelets, earrings, necklaces and hair accessories.

And, she said with a smile, “It feels good.”

Porter has no plans to spend the money she’s earned and is saving it for now. Now that she’s had a taste of success, she wants to sell as many of the handcrafted items as she can.

“It’s pretty exciting,” she said.

The Post-secondary Education, Employment and Research (PEER) program offers young adults ages 18-21 who have significant intellectual and developmental disabilities the chance to interact with people in their own age group as they prepare for employment and independence, both on campus and in the community.

PEER mentors—university students, participants in the CPD’s Interdisciplinary and Service Learning program, and others—help PEER students develop social, recreational and employment skills. Mentors might help students read newspapers and discuss current events with
them, fill out job applications or conduct mock job interviews.

PEER is also a research site for professionals who study ways to teach these skills to young adults with disabilities, as well as a site for practicum and student teacher placements.

During the 2012-13 school year, 15 young adults with disabilities are enrolled in the PEER program.