Seneca student Khadijah Deshong has been volunteering with ShopHERE, an initiative started by the City of Toronto to help local businesses and artists. (Photo: submitted)

Marketing student helps create online storefronts for free

Toronto project helps local businesses and artists

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Thanks to COVID-19, Khadijah Deshong has spent most of her first few months in Canada behind closed doors. Yet, the international student from Barbados is virtually building a network and building skills while helping local businesses and artists create an online presence.

Ms. Deshong joined Seneca's Marketing Management graduate certificate program (/programs/fulltime/MKM.html) in January. She recently signed up to volunteer with ShopHERE (https://digitalmainstreet.ca/shophere/), an initiative started by the City of Toronto to minimize the economic impact of the pandemic for independent businesses and artists. ShopHERE is delivered free of charge through the Digital Main Street platform and powered by Google.

"I thought this was a great initiative to help others," Ms. Deshong said. "Basically, my role is to kick-start the project for Digital Main Street and to get done as much as possible. I create the shell of the website and get it as close as possible to completion and then they hand it over to the clients after finalizing it."

Within a week of her joining the team, Ms. Deshong received her first project: to create an online store for 5Fifty5 (https://thesickkids5fifty5shop.ca/), a gift shop at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto. Other projects with ShopHERE have included virtual shops for Toronto-based artists Noa Yaari, Lindsay McDonald and Lisa Barbieri of Handcrafted Apparel.

Ms. Deshong says the experience of working with the City of Toronto and major players in the e-commerce sector has been tremendous. Not only is she happy to be associated with a worthwhile cause, the recognition of her work and the contacts she has made will help establish her career.

> **"It all happened because my professor at Seneca knew what I needed to do to jump-start my career and pointed me in the right direction."** — Khadijah Deshong

And she thanks her professor for the opportunity.

"My professor, Hemant Sangwan, was aware that I needed to network," she said. "He forwarded me a call-out by the City of Toronto for volunteers who were familiar with Shopify and website designing for a project to help small businesses."

Ms. Deshong says her education at Seneca has turned out to be exactly what she had expected: a program taught by professors with relevant work experience in their industries who bring real-world examples and in-depth knowledge to the class.

"And now, just a few months into the country and I'm already working with some of the top names in digital mainstream," she said. "It all happened because my professor at Seneca knew what I needed to do to jump-start my career and pointed me in the right direction."

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