



Photo by David LeClair

Andy Betz has worked at various Amazon sites, including launching a facility in Ohio and Buffalo. Beta enjoys being part of a brand-new community here in Belleville.

# Belleville's Amazon open for business

By David LeClair

With forklift operators honking and zipping by with products for either stock or orders shipping out, the Amazon facility team has operations in full swing in Belleville.

Associates are busy stocking, picking, pulling, and shipping orders to meet the needs of early Black Friday sales and preparing for the big official event that kicks off Friday on the platform.

YGK1 is the first facility in the east and the second "heavy-bulky" shipping facility Amazon has launched in Canada. The facility only ships items that weigh over 50 pounds and are over 52 inches, such as pool tables and massage chairs.

The one million square feet of the distribution centre is expected to be fully stocked by the end of winter or early spring.

According to management, the enormous Belleville Amazon fulfillment centre currently employs around 300 associates, offering full-time and part-time shifts and giving many students in Belleville employment opportunities.

The Amazon Facility was geared to-

wards hosting a diverse range of employees. Break rooms have multiple microwaves labelled, so religious or personal beliefs and boundaries are not crossed.

There is a multi-faith room that employees of different beliefs are welcome and invited to use on their scheduled breaks.

The number of employees needed on the distribution floor varies daily and seasonally with the volume of sales made on the platform.

Approximately 1,300 shipments leave the facility weekly, but management expects numbers to grow to 10,000 to 12,000 weekly shipments.

Associates are well-trained and must understand strict policies that ensure job safety before being placed on the facility's live floor and approximately 100 shipping docks.

With one distribution centre already in operation in Calgary, Amazon management has had the opportunity to understand all the safe work practices and policies needed to ensure that safety is the number one priority on site in Belleville.

Employee training courses take place on location at the massive distribution

warehouse and usually take approximately three hours to complete. An external safety team does initial training with Amazon's safety reps, who, once certified, are responsible for training newly-hired employees.

The warehouse floor is well-marked with different colours of tape that all have different meanings of safety to be abided by and followed by anyone on the premises.

The company offers employees different levels of support in-house from their Workplace Health and Safety Specialists in the Wellness Centre of the facility. The team helps minimize injuries from happening while in the workplace.

One of the amenities of the new facility is its 'lactation room', which is on location for new mothers to utilize while in the workplace.

Alex Glendenning, a production associate who has driven a forklift since the end of October, says they are always busy. Glendenning says the Amazon facility is a "world of opportunities."

Glendenning explained that Amazon is a positive workplace. Employees support one another, and safety is the top priority. "They want you to show up and leave

the exact same way you come in here," says Glendenning.

With various shaped and sized freight coming in and out of the distribution centre, the facility consists of open floor storage areas and extensive racking lined in aisles for pickers to make their rounds and assemble customer orders.

Amazon Parkway is a well-protected walkway connecting workers between the shipping and receiving departments.

Andy Betz, an eight-year employee who has worked at various Amazon sites, including launching a facility in Ohio and Buffalo, says he enjoys being part of a brand-new community. "Getting new associates and developing a team has been very fulfilling," said Betz.

Betz says that Amazon is a place for personal growth. Betz started as an associate, working through multiple roles, states, and countries.

"The sky is the limit," he said. "As long as you are willing to put in your effort, Amazon gives you the opportunities."

According to the site lead, Aman Chouhan, employee health benefits such as dental and vision start on the first day of employment. Unlike many employ-

ers, the company doesn't have a waiting period, and workers can immediately take advantage of the health care benefits available.

In-house, a learning team is in place to help educate and upscale employees' skill sets and cross-train to help push them further in their careers.

After working with the company for one year, employees are eligible for a career choice program, which will help cover the cost of attending college and getting a certification in an in-demand field. Amazon supports valued employees following their career goals and aspirations, and the company can be considered an acceptable stepping-stone to an alternative career choice.

The new facility is yet to have a deaf employee, but with Belleville being home to Sir James Whitney School for the Deaf, Amazon has made sure to be ready. Employees have easy access to a visual system that displays all sign language, plus includes "company slang" signs so everyone can speak the same vocabulary.

The Amazon Fulfillment Centre is now hiring for seasonal positions, and the facility is located at 640 College St. East, in the city's industrial park.

# Juggling and jogging go hand in hand

By Louis G. M. Oliver

On Nov. 18, what may now be a day in history for "jugglers" everywhere, Michal Kaprel (Guinness World Record holder of the fastest marathon, half marathon and 10-kilometre race while juggling) stepped foot onto a whole new ball game.

On the lofty trail grounds of Quinte West's Batawa Ski Hill, Kaprel participated in the 25<sup>th</sup> annual Fat Ass Trail Run hosted by the Dirty Soles Trail running group. Alongside nearly 600 fellow runners participating, Kaprel stuck out, as the only athlete juggling three white balls while attempting the steep and winding 10-kilometre trail run.

Juggling is just what it sounds like — running or jogging while juggling. Without the difficulty of facing the usual nemesis or inebriations like in his previous races such as his beer run in August 2016 (drinking four beers, running a mile and juggling). This time "the focus was everywhere" on the "incredibly difficult" course ahead of him, Kaprel said.

Reanalyzing the race afterwards, Kaprel reflected, saying, "When I run on the roads — like doing a marathon — I can kind of forget about the juggling because it's so second nature, but this time I really had to focus on trying not to trip on rocks and roots— how high to toss [the balls], where they're going to land, the other runners and the steep hills." "I was practically juggling right into my face [going downhill] — almost hitting myself in my forehead."



Photo by Louis G.M. Oliver

Michal Kaprel demonstrates his juggling skills.

Happily, Kaprel noted that he found a new enjoyment in his trail run at Batawa,

saying "I really love the trail jogging, so I would definitely do this again, it was a ton

of fun." admitting that it was like a 'real-life video game'.

Finding her voice between celebratory cowbells and plastic clappers, Naomi Coker, race director with Dirty Soles Trail Running, revealed that among the numerous courses of the kids run, the 1-km, 5-km and the six-hour run, the 10-km faced quite the technical scramble up the 200-metre elevation, along with whatever else nature could throw at the panting participants.

This all being said, we should consider this year to be a lucky one, remembering that "last year mother nature decided to throw us six feet of snow on race day," added Coker — as if to subtly hint towards the snowshoe race coming up at the end of January. Further noting that "[For] any of the Dirty Soles races that we host, anyone under eighteen is free with a parent that has registered and will run with the child."

After reaching these exciting new heights, Kaprel did not delay in sharing his new ambitions.

"I've been working on my five-ball juggling — for about 10 years now — which is about a hundred times harder than three — and I'm starting to finally get better at it," he said, explaining that he is planning on attempting a new record of five balls and five kilometres sometime in the near future.

Finally, whether you're active in your seat or in your shoes, make sure to stay tuned this winter for Kaprel's next technical spectacle by following him on his social media on Instagram @marathonjuggler or perhaps even attending one of the seasonally offered and affordable trail runs with Dirty Soles Trail Running.