

Working towards a career change: the first step is earning a GED

by Stella Shepard

There are many reasons to work towards a GED if you don't have a grade 12 diploma.

The following two adult learners have decided to go back to school while working on changing their career direction.

Steps to a new career for a mature learner

Lorna Larocque of Upper Montague is focusing on securing new employment prospects. She has acquired employability skills after years of working in retail sales and management. She is presently upgrading her education while working out a new career plan.

In 2008, Lorna enrolled in the **Adult Education** program in Montague in pursuit of a GED certificate.

"The company I had been working for was downsizing, and my working hours were reduced," says Lorna. "For the last few years, I had been thinking about returning to the classroom. With the company downsizing, I had the opportunity to enroll in Adult Education.

"The timing is right as I have come to a crossroad in my life. I am a mother of four and a grandmother to three young children. I devoted my life to my children after becoming a widow 12 years ago. My children have graduated from high school and are successful in life."



Lorna Larocque

Truck driver becomes an adult learner in pursuit of a new career

Gary Bellefontaine of Montague drove a tractor trailer all of his working life. The endless miles of highway driving and a love of the road came to an unexpected halt. Years of bouncing in the driver seat of the big rigs led to health issues. His doctor suggested Gary change his occupation following back surgery to repair a work-related injury.

"I wanted to stay in the trucking industry, which I knew and loved so well," says Gary. "While I was a truck driver, I saw the need to provide more Occupational Health & Safety information to truck drivers. I believe that education about proper procedures could prevent injuries.

"Safety on the job is becoming a major issue because industries and companies want to prevent work-related injuries. I've learned through research that there is a demand for **Occupational Health & Safety Officers**. There are job prospects in this career on PEI after I complete an 18-month on-line course."



Gary Bellefontaine

Future prospects

"I enjoyed many aspects of working in the retail sales sector," says Lorna. "I have acquired many valuable transferable skills. I am now obtaining the necessary academic skills to start a new career. I enjoy learning. The more I learn, the better my future employment prospects will be.

"I haven't decided on a career yet. I am keeping my options open. I am researching different careers of interest and researching the jobs that are in demand on PEI. I am more than willing to work to achieve the academic requirements for whatever career I decide to pursue."

Never too late

"It's never too late to change direction in life," says Lorna. "I only wish I had done this years ago but I had to work to provide for my children. Now I have the freedom to pursue a career goal. It's never too late for anyone to seek an education or to pursue a career goal."

Steps to a new career

"I knew that I had to upgrade my education if I wanted a new career," says Gary. "I've been out of high school for 35 years, and I don't have pleasant memories of high school.

"When I first considered enrolling in the Adult Education program, my first thoughts were that I was too old and I couldn't do it. But I knew that if I went back to truck driving, I would eventually need more surgery on my back. In 2008, I reluctantly enrolled in the Adult Education program in Montague.

"I am now glad that I did enroll because I am enjoying the experience. It's a completely different learning environment than my high school years. I am in class because I want to, not because I have to. I am planning to write the GED tests in the new year."

Family support

"It can be financially challenging to be in class and not in the workforce," says Gary. "My wife and children are very supportive. I have a daughter in junior high, a daughter in university, a son and daughter working out west and a son working in Charlottetown. They think it's great that Dad has gone back to school. The end result of a new career is well worth going back to school.

"My advice to anyone considering adult education is **Go For It!** A person is never too old to retrain or upgrade their education."

G For more information about earning a GED certificate, call the **Department of Innovation and Advanced Learning** at 368-4650.

Adult education programs are an option for high school graduates

by Stella Shepard

There has been an increase in the number of young high school graduates enrolling in **Adult Education** programs.

"In the last couple of years, a third or more of those enrolled in Adult Education were high school graduates," says **Anne Morrison**, instructor at the Adult Education program in Morell. "Last year, almost half of our students were high school graduates between the ages of 19 and 25.

"These students told us that while they were in high school, they were satisfied with their marks and had no plans to continue with their education after graduation. Later, when they decided to enroll in college and university programs, they discovered that they needed higher marks and different credits.

"These students are more open to learning than they were in high school because they are more mature. New graduates often don't know what career or education path to follow. When they join the workforce, many come to a decision about their career interest. They also discover what jobs are available and what careers are in demand.

"The Adult Education program allows students to join at any time throughout the school year. Classes are offered in the day time or in the evenings, which allows learners to work while enrolled in the program. Another benefit is that there is no tuition cost to the student."

Graduate returns to the classroom

Kelsey MacDonald has changed the direction of her learning path since graduating from Morell High School in 2004. She was undecided about a career while in high school. After graduation, she took a year off to work.

"Entering the workforce after graduation allowed me to consider my career options before making a final decision," says Kelsey. "In 2005, I enrolled at UPEI and concentrated on Sociology. Last year, I was on the Dean's list, but I wasn't enjoying the university environment and I realized I was focusing on the wrong career.

"I decided to change my career path. I had considered a nursing career while in high school, but I didn't think I could do it because math was a challenge. Now I am ready to give it a try. In 2008, I enrolled in the Adult Education program in Morell. I needed to upgrade Grade 12 math and biology, which are required to apply to a nursing program.

"I am now at a stage in my life where I can make better career decisions. I now know that I can earn higher marks in math and aim for a career in the health field. I am considering enrolling in the **Practical Nursing** program at Holland College or the **Registered Nursing** program at UPEI."



Kelsey MacDonald, formerly of Peakes, examines a model of the brain. She scored 99 in a biology exam on how the human brain functions. "When you are young and trying to figure out what you want to do, you need to explore your options before getting it right," says 22-year-old Kelsey. "Work and previous school experiences have given me the confidence to believe that I can achieve my career goal."

G To register with any of the Island-wide Holland College Adult & Community Education programs, contact the central office at 566-9628 or call toll-free at 1-800-446-5265