

Souris Adult Education learners are recognized at closing ceremony

by Stella Shepard

Adult Education

The 2009 Souris Adult Education recognition night was held in April. Proud learners, families and friends filled the room at the closing ceremony. Learners were recognized for their accomplishments during the past year.

Instructor **Susan Cheverie** thanked learners for their courage to further their education. It is important to acknowledge our learners, the people who made it happen," says Susan. "Many have thought of doing this for a long time, so you can take pride in your success tonight.

"There are many reasons why people put off going back to school," says Susan. "Perhaps they didn't realize that more education could help them make a job change. Maybe they wanted a change due to the physical demands or stress levels of their present job but were unsure of how to make this happen. Others are busy raising a family and feel they don't have time to go back to school.

"Sometimes learners are hesitant to come back to school because they find it difficult to step out of their comfort zone. It can be the fear of not being able to do the required work, or the fear of what people will think of them.

"Everybody has their own reason for not going back to school, but I have never met a learner who thought it was a waste of time," says Susan. "I encourage each learner to tell others about the experience of fulfilling their educational dreams."

Student's story

Linda Chaisson of St. Charles Road near Souris was class speaker at the recognition ceremony.

"I am 41 years old attending the Adult Education program and proud of it," says Linda. "People ask me why I would go back to school at this time in my life. I answer by saying 'because I can.' The timing is right for me at this point in my life.

"I quit high school to go to work because I liked having money. A few years later, I decided to get my GED because I knew I wouldn't get far in life without a grade 12 education.

"Growing up, I never had an interest in pursuing a career. After being out of school for awhile, I jumped at the chance to study and work in Business Administration, thinking it would be a life-long career. Instead, it was a very unsettling career that was not for me. I changed jobs to work at a long-term care facility. It was rewarding work that I really enjoyed. After a few years of working, I decided to have a family.

"I later worked at other jobs that were not as rewarding. But I stayed at the jobs I didn't like because I had bills to pay.

"I soon realized that if you live your life to pay the bills you will die without ever having lived. I didn't want my life to pass by without stopping to figure out what makes me happy and living my passion."

Linda Chaisson

"I put aside what other people expected of me and decided to go back to school and get a diploma in Practical Nursing. The Adult Education program is a great stepping-stone to help me reach my goals.

"I feel really good about myself knowing I can succeed and have a rewarding career that I will enjoy. I encourage others to follow their hearts and reach for their goals."



Linda Chaisson was the student speaker at the Holland College Adult Education recognition ceremony in Souris.

"My husband and son encouraged me to go back to school," says Linda. "They are very supportive of my career goal and are very proud of me."

Guest speaker motivates class to achieve their dreams

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Kathy Patterson was the guest speaker at the 2009 Montague Adult Education recognition night.

"I want to thank instructor Susan Conohan for this opportunity to tell my story," says Kathy. "I hope that I have shown every learner here tonight that the choices you make will make you who you are. The question is: Who do you choose to be?"

Kathy Patterson of Cardigan delivered a motivational message to the adult learners at the **Montague Adult Education** recognition night held in May. She shared her own personal academic journey to a packed room of learners who were recognized for their accomplishments during the year.

Kathy has gone from dropping out of high school to graduating with honours from UPEI

"I almost cancelled my speech tonight because public speaking is very difficult for me. But I reminded myself that I am not the type of person to quit when things get difficult or scary. If I were, I would not be here tonight." Kathy Patterson

Her story

"I was sidetracked by many distractions in high school such as social events, parties, and a young man, who after 25 years, I continue to call my husband," says Kathy.

"As a young woman with a growing family, I soon realized that my career options were extremely limited by my lack of skill sets. I accepted any job that would help pay for my home, groceries and the needs of my three children. To say the least, there were no extras."

Going back to school

"I thought about going back to school many times," says Kathy. "My negative experiences in high school held me back. After the birth of my third son, I realized I needed to move beyond my fear of failure. I had to prove to my children and especially to myself that I could accomplish more with my life.

"In 2000, I decided to enroll in the **Holland College Adult Education** in Montague. I was a busy mom and wife and I worked shifts at a local restaurant while enrolled in the program.

"I shyly told a Holland College representative that I always had a hidden desire to go to university. I thought she would laugh because of my unimpressive high school transcripts. Instead of laughing, she encouraged me to hold on to that goal.

"At the end of two years at the adult education program, I knew I wanted more knowledge. I was now certain that I could succeed at university, but tuition was very expensive. With determination, a strong work ethic, and a solid plan in place, I accepted a job managing a convenience store.

"I saved every dollar I could, and after four years I registered as a mature student at UPEI with my university tuition paid in full. I was 37, mother of three young boys, a wife, and a business woman with tons of life experience. I set forth on the most terrifying academic journey of my life but it felt great.

"Last year, I walked across the stage to accept my **Bachelor of Arts degree**. I can honestly say it was the most humbling moment of my life."

Fulfilling dreams

"One year ago, on this very date, I accepted a position with the **PEI Department of Social Services and Seniors**," says Kathy. "In 2009, I was promoted to the management team at the Montague and Souris offices.

"Every learner here tonight recognizes and understands that life is too short to not fulfill your dreams. You have already taken the most important step to making your dreams a reality. I applaud your choice to continue your studies in the adult education program. What should make you most proud is not this recognition night but what you had to do to get to this point."