



# Returning to Learning Changes Lives

Celebrating Adult Learners' Week

April 15 – 20, 2019

The Literacy Coalition of New Brunswick  
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# Celebrating Adult Learner's Week

April 15 – 20, 2019

## “Returning to Learning Changes Lives”

Adult Literacy Week is an occasion to acknowledge the triumphs that many New Brunswickers have and celebrate the importance of life-long learning in our lives.

In conjunction with this week, the Literacy Coalition held their annual Adult Learners' Writing Contest, with this year's theme being “*Returning to Learning Changes Lives*”. Congratulations to our essay contest winners and a sincere thank you to all who participated in the contest. Each essay contest winner will receive a \$100 prize and a framed certificate at the Literacy Coalition PGI gala Literacy Dinner and Auction on May 7<sup>th</sup> at the Delta Hotel in Fredericton.

### **2019 ESSAY CONTEST WINNERS**

**Kianne Nicholas-Perley** - Tobique Adult Learning Centre

**Samuel Côté-Larouche** – Classe d'alphabétisation du centre diocésain d'Edmundston

**Crystal Drew** – Community Adult Learning Program, Saint John Learn Exchange

**Gloria Clark** – Kingsclear Training Centre, Central Valley Adult Learning Assoc.

[We received submissions from over 30 contestants whose inspiring stories are featured here on our website.](#)

*Thanks to all for sharing your stories about how returning to learning has changed your life!*

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## **Edna's Story**

### **Edna Amos**

Adult Literacy Fredericton

<http://www.adultliteracyfredericton.org/>

Teacher: Alison Teague

I was 3 lbs when I was born in London Ontario. My Parents brought me home in a shoebox. I grew up in Fredericton, in Nashwaaksis. It was a bit lonely – I'm not one to make too many friends; I stick to a few.

I started working right after high school - been doing janitorial since 89. I knew Mum and Dad weren't going to be around forever, so I said to myself, I said: Maybe it's time to step up. I want to be independent. My neighbor did some calling around. I spoke to the woman at Literacy NB. She said, "You sound very, very strong."

I was only 42 when I first came in. Seven years ago. People learn at their own speed, so I decided to take a break. But this past July, I decided I was ready to come back. I wanted to keep learning.

We met at the the Oromocto Library. I've worked with Ricky. She used to be a teacher. She doesn't listen to "I can't"! She'll give me homework and I'll go further - not too far beyond; just a couple of pages. I'm crazy over math - Love math!

What has changed? I'll try to figure out whatever I don't know. I like to challenge myself with big words now. I'll pick up the newspapers on Thursdays at work. One time there was an article about my friend's daughter and I found it in the paper! I brought it to her and her daughter hanged it on her wall. She's always reading it.

I still have difficulty when I fill things out sometimes. I have to read the chemicals at work. I passed the safety test - I was right proud of myself! Only made 3 mistakes in the whole test!

I have so many goals. I want to get my driver's license. I want to become a tutor. I want to work with children - maybe read to them as a volunteer.

I know what it's like to struggle. But I also know you can do it.

What's my motto? Don't give in; don't give up."

## **Returning To Learning Changes Lives**

### **Marie Antonette Bugay**

New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre

Teacher: Gwen McConnell

Who dreams of growing up and ending up in jail? I believe no one ever dreams of that reality, but in this reality called my life, I AM incarcerated. I never imagined that I would ever end up in this type of situation, but, since I am, I had to believe that I could NOT just sit back and let life pass me by. Instead, I was proactive and requested to attend the General Educational Development (GED) class at the institution. I already had my high school diploma so, originally, I attended the classes to help pass my time in jail, but, once I started to complete the curriculums in Mathematics and Language Writing, I came to realize that I was very strong in school.

When further encouragement from my support systems poured in, I decided that I would seek out any possibilities that I could to broaden my education, for example post-secondary courses. After a long battle with the management of the institution, the assistance from the teachers and a couple of correctional officers, plus the persistence I had, it all paid off and I was granted the privilege to continue post-secondary education through a distance education program provided by a west coast university. The courses I am currently taking are electives that fall under the Bachelor of Business program.

In my previous life (before my incarceration), I was technically a registered massage therapist in New Brunswick, and, since I was a self-employed therapist, I believed that taking business classes would only help make my own endeavours more successful. Unfortunately, with how my current dilemma is unfolding, there is a possibility that I may not be able to continue my practice, so the question regarding my current situation became, "What will I do for work if I cannot return to massage therapy when I finally get out?"

At forty-one years old, I had to revisit the same choices I had over twenty years ago in my last years of high school: the hardship of deciding what career path I desired and how I was going to pursue it. The decision was not easy because, to pursue another career path in what I believed to be at an old age, was a dilemma I never figured I would have to overcome. Nonetheless, one of my GED teachers, Mr. Bob Gillis, opened my eyes to many possibilities that I am able to follow. He made me believe that, no matter the age or situation one was in, if they truly wanted to succeed in their goals and were willing to work hard for it, everything was possible.

In class, we were introduced to a guest speaker from the New Brunswick Apprenticeship and Occupation Program who spoke to us about the opportunities there are for work and furthering our education into a field that not many women are in. Through apprenticeships, you alternate between working in the field of choice and being paid to learn your trade. The guest speaker, Mr. Wade Wheaton, explained the importance of GED in helping prepare you in the path to an apprenticeship. The GED class was also the outlet for more information on how I could pursue this new goal. I had decided on a new career as an electrician. As a female future electrician in New Brunswick, I also hope to be a great role model for other women to pursue a career in a male-dominated field so that we can prove to the world that we are no longer considered a weaker sex in this industry.

In closing, returning to learning has positively changed my life forever. "What we do today, right now, will have an accumulated effect on all our tomorrows," was stated by Ann Frank. I truly believe that learning has led me to bigger dreams and goals. It has given me a great foundation to pursue further education and choose a new profession. As an electrician, I am required to be strong in mathematics, and my GED class has helped me sharpen those skills. It has also been a guide to the next path I must take to fulfil my career goals. The teachers provide us with more information and connect us with the proper resources. They also showed me the doors in life that I did not know were opened for me. As unfortunate as my situation has been, I believe that when one door seems to be closing, not only one but another four open. These opened doors led me to this great new journey.

## **Returning to Learning Changes Lives**

### **Julia Biseau**

Alpha Bathurst Learning Center - Apprentissage pour adultes Chaleur Adult Learning Inc.

Teacher: Joselyn Serrano

As S. Devi used to say, "Education is not just about going to school and getting a degree, it is about widening your knowledge and absorbing the truth about life." The world is a big classroom and I believe that learning is a lifelong process that transcends beyond getting a diploma or degree. Every experience or challenges we encountered in life gives us a lesson or two. There is no such thing as "too late or too early" when it comes to education or learning. It is always possible to achieve something in life despite of many challenges you might have or had: age, family situation, learning disability, social anxiety and economic status. As long as you are open to embrace change and ready to conquer your fears; the whole new door of opportunities will be opened for you.

First, I'm going to tell you about why I decided to return to learning. I'm 28 years old without a full education on my record and with a 5-year-old who just recently started school himself. I left school when I was in Grade 10 because of bullying and the major stress I was under with home life. School for me was extremely difficult especially being diagnosed with ADHD. Furthermore, I was also diagnosed with dyscalculia when I was 24 and that made it a bit harder on me because if I would have known I had that disorder whilst in high school I would have received special accommodation to help me with my Math. Few years after I left school, I had my son who is my biggest inspiration on why I wanted to complete my education. I would like to be able to get somewhere so I can show him and everyone else that no matter how old you are, you can still make a difference in your life and can still have a good future even when things may seem impossible.

I have been struggling to keep up with everyday life no matter what I tried. I was generally just tired of dead-end jobs and not being able to get anywhere for years because I didn't have a diploma to even get a good paying job. I have been on social assistance for many years and was always thinking because of my age that at this point it was hopeless to think that I could have a future and a career this late in my life. My case worker told me about the classes for adults that help you get back into learning and achieving the goals you want. They provide funding which includes transportation, daycare and after school programs for kids and help make a schedule that best suits you. I decided that it was high time I kick started my future and picked up my phone and got the information I needed to get started as soon as I could, so that I'm able to get a good career that I enjoy doing so I can better my life not only for me but for my son as well.

Going back to school as an adult changed my life in so many different ways. I used to be very anti-social especially with people I didn't know. I didn't care for meeting new people as I was much more comfortable with the friends I already knew. When I first found out I was going to be starting school I was so excited that I was finally going to be able to get my education. But when the start date in class was approaching, I began to get extremely nervous that my anxiety started to kick into overdrive and just immediately started throwing excuses at myself as to why I shouldn't go. I was in a panic mode again that I won't be able to make it, since, 3 years prior I had tried already to go back to school and it wasn't successful because of certain things that were going on in my life at the time. Finally, the day came for the first day of classes. I woke up got myself and my son ready, brought him to the bus and once he was on his way to school it was my turn. When I arrived in class there were few people already there, faces I have never seen before and a completely new environment that I was accustomed to at all. I got myself settled into my seat and pretty much just kept to myself for most of the day, that is until two of my classmates decided to talk to me. I was generally surprised as I really didn't think anybody was going to, I thought it was going to be high school all over again. We ended up hitting it off pretty well, found out a lot of things about each other and we had a lot more in common than I anticipated.

As for my teacher, well that's another story. I have never had such an amazing teacher, I mean compared to high school she made our class feel like home. She is always cheerful and makes you feel like you could do anything you set your mind to. And guess what, her upbeat attitude and her belief in me helped me realized in the long run that I was capable of doing so much more than I thought I could. In class, I am comfortable working at my own pace and my teacher is always available for me whenever I need help. Everybody is very understanding and I never felt judged about my education level, lifestyle or anything. They always find a way to help you out no matter what it's about, its almost like I found myself a second family. It so much more relaxing than high school ever was. I think that was one of my biggest fears was that things were going to be like it was for me in high school, but boy was I ever wrong! This has been the best experience I ever had and best decision I ever made for myself. All my insecurities are gone and I feel like a completely new person, in a good way of course. My classmates and my teacher have made my time here extraordinary, indeed. So not only am I getting my education, I have made a few new friends and an entirely new positive attitude.

I have a few goals for my future once I finish my upgrading and complete my GED. I plan to take Auto Body Repair course at the college. Not many people would think of this profession suitable for women and not many would go for that type of work, but like I always told myself, there's nothing wrong with being different. My gender will not define my career choices, I believe that I can achieve anything if I put my time, my heart and effort into it. So, once I graduate from college, I am planning on working with my dad in



his garage that he owns on his property and eventually I`m hoping to take over the business once he retires, to keep the legacy going sort of speak. Finally, someday in the future I`m going to buy myself a nice house where I could raise my son in.

In conclusion, learning changes lives in so many ways. It will open doors of opportunities in the future, you will get to understand your own strengths and weaknesses as a learner, it will help you build new friendships and help you foster positive attitude towards life. Never think that it is too late to get your education, whether you quit school in your younger years, never went, or for any reason you might have had to stop. There is always support and help available through social services, employment agencies, local community and of course, your family. All you have to do is to recognize you need help, reach out and have a strong will that you want to achieve something greater in life. There is always a reason if you search inside yourself to go back and get it done. My greatest "why" is my son, because I want to make a good example for him. I want to show him that education is the best thing he can have in his life and that no matter what obstacles may land in his way that he can do anything he puts his mind to. Never forget your worth because you can make your dreams come true if you truly want them because if you can dream it you can achieve it.

## **How Returning to Learning has changed my Life**

### **Trenton Brown**

Woodstock Adult Learning Centre – Western Valley Adult Learning Association

<https://www.wvala.ca/>

Teacher: Joanne McIsaac

For the past few years, I have come to regret leaving school and abandoning my responsibility to learn more and more as each year passed. I was stuck in a dead-end job, and I felt that I wasn't going anywhere as a person. I didn't feel like I was fulfilling who I am supposed to be as a person. Throughout the months I tried finding ways to "fill this hole" that I had. I had tried working harder and more than I already was, and nothing seemed to help. Then I made the decision to go back to learning and take the GED. I honestly think that was one of the best decisions I have made in my life thus far.

Now that I have been asked why I have returned to learning, I actually need to put those reasons and feelings down onto paper, and one of the first of a million reasons is that this was one of the first steps of many in the right direction of bettering myself as a person and as a whole. The adult learning program has given me a chance to do what I didn't think was possible. I didn't think that I would ever be back in school again and I certainly didn't think that one day soon I could be in college. I wanted and needed this to better myself as a person and this program has helped me with just that. This program has given me something that most people haven't. A chance.

This program has given me the ability to set bigger and higher goals for my future, because let's face it. I couldn't stay at the Dollar Store my entire life and expect to get anywhere knowing that I was capable of so much more. I can now go to college and take mechanics and turn something that I love into a job. I can now create a better life for myself and I didn't think I would ever get another shot at that. I can keep growing and bettering myself as a person long after I have graduated from the GED program and college, and I plan to keep doing just that.

Coming back to learning has changed my life in more ways that I can count. It has given me the chance to correct one of the bigger mistakes in my life and has given me hope for a better future for myself and my future family and the adult learning program has given me the chance to go and prove everyone who has ever doubted me wrong. This program has shown me that even great things can happen to a person like me, and all I have to do is work for them.

I felt like I was at rock bottom and that I wasn't going anywhere as a person before I started this program, now I feel as if my future is changed and that it is bulletproof. That is all thanks to the people that are a part of this program and I thank them for giving me

a chance to better myself in ways that I no longer thought were possible. I hope that one day I can pay it forward and maybe give someone else the ability to change their life for the best.

## **Returning to Learning Changes Lives**

### **Joshua Butler**

Bath Adult Learning Centre – Western Valley Adult Learning Association

<https://www.wvala.ca/>

Teacher: Beverley Haines

After years of struggling to find a career, I realized I needed to complete my education. I enrolled in the Adult Learning Program in Bath. Thanks to the Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, I was able to attend class and still support my children.

I've returned to the Adult Learning Class not only to obtain my grade twelve education, as well as, go to community college. I'd like to take the IT Network Administration and a Business Management. Each of these courses are a two-year course. Four years for a great career, a life full of success, and prosperity. The security of my children's future is why I've returned to pursue my education.

In order to obtain this, I must achieve the goals I've set for myself. These goals include: staying sober, enlist in all programs available to me, study hard, never give up, and for now, continue with the Adult Learning Class.

Returning to learning is by far one of the best life decisions I've made thus far! Not only does it make me feel more positive about my future, it also sets a good example for my children. I'm thankful for the opportunity the Adult Learning Program has given me, and I encourage anyone to take this course to obtain their grade twelve diploma!

## **Returning to Learning Changing Lives**

### **Kyle Butler**

Oromocto First Nation Learning Program – Central Valley Adult Learning Association

<https://www.cvala.ca/>

Teacher: Kelly Coleman

Returning to school has done good things for me. I returned to school because I knew I would not get very far in life without my GED. Returning to school has also changed my life for the better. It has made me feel that I can do anything I want if I put my mind to it. School has helped me discover new goals for my future.

I dropped out of school to go to work. I worked for a couple of years and then realized I made a mistake. I was working a low paying, dead end job. I needed an education, so I could get a well-paying job. I knew the first step to have a better life was to return to school. I needed to get my GED because I am interested in becoming an aircraft mechanic.

Returning to school has helped me find my way. It has helped me make new goals for my future. I have changed my mind a couple of times about the career I want to pursue. First, I wanted to be a paramedic, but I soon changed my mind. I now know I would rather join the military and become a proud member of the air force.

Returning to school to get my GED has done great things for me. I have learned many valuable lessons. I have made some new lifelong friends. Being back in school has given me a sense of accomplishment because I stuck with it, and I didn't give up. I just completed my GED, and I am proud of myself!

These are the reasons why I returned to school. My life has changed for the better since I have been going to school to get my GED. Without the guidance and support from my teacher, I don't think I would have set such goals. It has been the best decision I have made to return to school to get my GED. Now that I completed my GED, I will join the military. I am happy that I will have a career that I will enjoy.

## **Returning to Learning Changes Lives**

### **Timothy Canam**

Bath Adult Learning Centre – Western Valley Adult Learning Association

<https://www.wvala.ca/>

Teacher: Beverley Haines

Due to the circumstances in my life from the past four years has led me to where I am today. I was using drugs and getting into trouble.

Going back to school has changed my life in many ways; such as staying out of trouble, doing drugs, learning new things, getting my education and having a steady income. It makes me think clearer. It has strengthened my brain to think clearer and more positive about myself.

Getting my GED and a trade is something I would like to do. It has helped me financially to be able to get a three-wheeler for a way to travel.

I hope to better my life by getting my GED so I can go on to get a trade in welding or be a heavy equipment operator. They have a large selection on different things you can take, which I like.

When I was younger, school did not interest me, however, now that I'm older, I find it is important to get your education and you have to have a grade twelve to get a job anywhere today.

It helps people who don't have a job and on welfare, to make our community stronger in the work force.

My opinion is to go back to school and get your education. It will make your life much easier. Thank you so much to Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour for making my life better.

## **Returning To Learning – Changing Lives**

**Gloria Clark**

Kingsclear Training Centre – Central Valley Adult Learning Association

<https://www.cvala.ca>

Teacher: Karen Paul

I left my formal education at the age of 16. I had made it half way through eighth grade. Being young, I never understood the value of a basic high school education. Now, over thirty years later, I have come to realize that grade 12 is an important building block to higher learning. I am happy that I have returned to learning. Learning has improved my life in several ways, as well as helped me to reach my future goals that before were unattainable. Many times in my adult life, I had wanted to return to school to obtain my grade 12 equivalency. I was diverted by the need for money in order to help support others in my life to achieve their educational goals. As the years passed, I got involved in jobs that I could do without a grade 12 diploma. In recent years, my perspective greatly changed.

Since I was young, I had a hunger to learn new things. While my schooling was interrupted at an early age, I worked and learned skills through this process. Just before my return to the education system after thirty plus years, I was employed in a fast-paced restaurant environment. I had worked for the same company for almost ten years. I enjoyed my time working there. On the other hand, I could feel my body aging. I would often look for a job that would be physically easier, but my lack of education kept a lot of doors closed for me. Eventually, the heavy lifting took its toll on me and I had to be put off work in order to have a hernia repair surgery.

My time off from my job was a time of reflection and coming to a solid life changing decision. It was time to return to learning and obtain my long-deferred dream of graduating from high school. I could see retirement looming in my not-so-distant future and I had no plan. Time was racing on and I felt I had to grasp the chance to return to school. I knew I had the potential to unlock many new skills and I could do that in the classroom setting. The desire was there to face challenges and learning curves that I was sure to encounter.

Since I have begun my journey at the Adult Learning Center in Kingsclear, life has already changed in many positive ways. Getting up every morning to come to class is enjoyable, even though it can be challenging. Using my mind to learn new things is like opening up a huge, new world. The more I learn, the more it intrigues me to learn more. Overcoming subjects that I felt were beyond me makes me really happy. My self worth is increasing as I finally understand subjects that were hard before. Learning from positive mentors really is inspiring. The input I receive is motivational.

I will soon stand at the summit of my new and improved future. Once my grade 12 is finally obtained, I will look ahead to future goals. I am already considering the many doors now opening to me. I am considering a career in the mental health field. College will surely be part of my future. These future goals will build toward a comfortable retirement. One of my personal goals is to improve my writing skills. I may even write my life story and have it published!

In conclusion, returning to learning has greatly changed my life. My only regret is that I had not done it sooner. My future is now much broader. Now, jobs that I desire are attainable. Also, my financial future is brighter. Returning to learning can change your mindset about learning and about life. I am glad I made this step and I recommend returning to learning to anyone who hasn't earned their high school diploma.



## **Returning to Learning Changes Lives**

### **Edward Cogswell**

Bath Adult Learning Centre – Western Valley Adult Learning Association

<https://www.wvala.ca/>

Teacher: Beverley Haines

I want to get my GED Diploma so I can get a better job. I also want to show my kids that if I can do this, then they can stay in school, too.

If everything goes my way, I want to get a trade of some kind. At my age, it's not easy to do the GED, it isn't like being in school, it's so much harder. In the long run, I hope it will make my life easier.

If I have the diploma to show an employer when I go for a job, it proves I can finish what I've started.

## **La résilience ; une clé passe-partout**

**Samuel Côté-Larouche**

La classe d'alphabétisation du centre diocésain d'Edmundston

<http://alphalavallee.com/>

Enseignant : Michel Gagné

Avez-vous déjà eu l'envie de vivre quelque chose de nouveau, vaincre vos peurs et foncer vers l'inconnu? Comme la vie est courte! Savez-vous que, l'erreur de l'être humain le plus souvent, c'est qu'il choisi de vivre le plus court sans affronter le plus long. C'est à ce moment là que toute beauté de la vie lui échappe. C'est comme lorsqu'on roule à vive allure à bord d'une voiture et que l'on tente d'admirer le paysage. Pourquoi le fait-on? Probablement parce qu'on a peur.

Choisir le chemin le plus facile c'est d'ignorer les belles choses de la vie, de refuser d'affronter les problèmes quotidiens. Pourtant ce sont eux qui nous rendent plus forts. C'est ce que l'on appelle tomber pour mieux se relever. D'où vient le mot "Résilience". Il est significatif pour moi et a eu sa raison d'être dans ma vie. Ce n'est ni mes proches, ni un mentor qui m'a vendu l'idée de retourner sur les bancs d'école. C'est plutôt l'envie d'avoir, comme toutes les autres, ma place sur terre et l'envie de partager de nouvelles connaissances à son prochain.

Je ne suis pas un miraculé ni un héros, oh non ! Bien au contraire je suis simplement moi-même. J'ai une confiance en moi, une motivation de faire et un vouloir de renaître. Accompagné de cette résilience, je perçois la vie autrement à l'intérieur et offre une vision différente de moi, aux regards de gens qui m'entourent. Je suis uni à la vie pour le meilleur et pour le pire! J'ai son alliance avec moi et je respecterai mes promesses, je serai réaliste en ayant pour but de fixer des objectifs tout en restant neutre. M'imaginer des petits défis et les transformer en réussite, un à la fois. En échange, une récompense s'offrira à moi ; je serai l'heureux gagnant de cette histoire. C'est gratifiant n'est-ce pas ?

La gratitude se doit d'être illuminée à son maximum. Vous savez, l'étoile de Mozart dans la mélodie "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" brille comme un diamant dans le ciel. C'est l'exemple parfait pour conserver ses rêves et ses réussites, aussi précieusement que l'or. Voici une façon géniale de récolter avec fierté et d'apprécier la vie qui s'offre à nous. Il devient un cadeau du ciel, de pouvoir foncer tout en respectant ses propres valeurs et de pouvoir se diriger tout droit vers le bonheur.

Mon bonheur c'est qu'aujourd'hui, j'ai une voiture, j'ai une maison et l'amour inconditionnel de deux adorables trésors : une merveilleuse femme sur qui je peux compter et une charmante petite fille de 2 ans, remplie d'énergie. Quoi de mieux pour encourager un retour à l'école! J'avais jadis un bon emploi à faible revenu. Nous

n'avions pas la richesse nécessaire mais avec un peu d'amour, j'ai su apporté tout ce dont une famille a besoin. Eux en retour, m'ont donné le reflet de la lumière qui émanait de leurs tendres cœurs : l'amour propre! Je suis bien dans ma peau et serai en mesure de transmettre à autrui les connaissances et les habiletés requises.

Depuis mon retour à l'école, je suis stable émotionnellement et cela a su apporté au sein de ma famille, une ambiance chaleureuse au quotidien. Vivre dans l'harmonie matin et soir, jour et nuit avec le sourire contagieux aura comme effet d'estomper toutes douleurs imprévues.

Désormais, l'avenir m'appartient et se situe dans le creux de mes mains! Je cite dans la poésie :

« Je voguerai avec mes rêves et lèverai les voiles au sommet de la réussite. Papa part en voyage, petit bagage du départ, papa instruit reviendra au port »

## **How Returning to Learning Changes Lives**

### **Lori Damon**

Charlotte County Adult Learning Inc.

<http://www.ccalp.ca/>

Teacher: Maureen Ean

For me, returning to school has always been something I had the desire to do. For many years after having my three youngest, I have wanted to return. I did take Private Investigating and Criminology through Stratford Institute. They sent me the books and I did tests online. I passed with a 98% overall. These two courses have been what I have wanted to do for a very long time. My difficulty with all this has been, I have two children with autism.

My belief is, and always has been, "No matter what your age, you're never too old to learn something new, and to make your life better." There may be obstacles at times. Find solutions around them, and never give up. I realized before doing my courses that I needed my grade twelve to finish my college in Private Investigating and Criminology. I chose to do this part first because I knew I could do it from home; I could also still be here for my kids while I did my online courses.

My children and my desire to achieve a higher standard of living is what keeps me motivated. I want to be out of the welfare system, and to show my kids that no dream is impossible, if you have the drive to reach for the stars.

My future is looking brighter every day. Once I have completed my GED, I have plans of going to college in the fall and completing my courses. I am very excited for what my future holds for me as a Private Investigator/ Criminologist. Every day is a new day, and a day closer to achieving my goals, and a better life for me and my kids.

## **Returning to Learning Changes Lives**

**Annie J. Dickinson**

Woodstock Adult Learning Centre – Western Valley Adult Learning Association

<https://www.wvala.ca/>

Teacher: Joanne McIsaac

I returned to the Learning Changes Lives to further my education and learning skills, after you fail and fail again in this world you hope to succeed this time. Doing this makes me proud of myself and makes others proud of you; By me doing this I hope to change my life in doing so, I think it's never to late to improve your Education. I'm hoping to get my GED Diploma so I can reach my goal in life.

The reason why I like to reach my goal is because after I, Graduate, I want to be a Home Support Worker. Hoping to accomplish this. So I can do what I have my heart set to do; My Education and Learning is getting much better since I started back to school; hoping to have a better future in showing others you are never to old to get an Education. This is why I returned to Learning Changes Lives.

## **NB Literacy Adult Learners Writing Contest**

### **Crystal Drew**

Community Adult Learning – Saint John Learning Exchange

<http://www.sjle.org>

Teacher: Dale Kilpatrick

By the time I was 17, I had changed schools 10 times and lived in six different cities. The novelty of being the new kid was long gone, so I started doing everything I could to stay home from school. The more time I missed, the more anxious I felt going back.

My life turned into a constant battle of avoidance, falling behind and being lost. I sank deep into an anxiety disorder. Asking for help seemed impossible and education became increasingly meaningless. Eventually, all my willpower to finish school fizzled out and I left high school in 2013 without any credits.

I was angry with myself. I watched my peers working and graduating, things that seemed so normal to everyone else. I thought, *this is not the life I should have had*.

At 19, I was broke, young and without an education. I was living back in my hometown of Saint John where I leapt at the offer of a full-time cleaning job. For the next three years, I thought of the life I should have had while scrubbing room-sized shower stalls in big, beautiful homes.

Everything changed this past summer when I was laid off, but I felt more relief than heartbreak and took it as an opportunity to seek out The Learning Exchange in January of 2019.

At 23-years-old, I jumped full-time into the Community Adult Learning Program to study for the GED tests. I had fantasies of what I wanted to do with my life but had been too scared to consider them a real possibility.

I felt included almost immediately. Hearing bits of my classmate's life stories, while each unique, helped me realize I am not so different than everyone else.

My journey here as a learner has become so much more than just getting my GED. I find myself curious at the mention of a presentation or a new program, instead of instinctively shying away.

I've attended every weekly guest presentation and joined in the Money Matters course. The people who work here contribute to an environment that breeds learning at its core. In class with facilitator Dale Kilpatrick, a comment about the weather could lead to an interactive lesson on meteorology, or a tip on accurate news sources. I'm learning things about myself and my capabilities every day – and it's exciting.

In a little over two months, I've written and passed two of the GED tests. With help from coaches, I've also obtained my learner's drivers licence and applied to the New Brunswick College of Craft and Design. I was ecstatic when I received an

acceptance letter into the Foundation Visual Arts program for the 2019-2020 academic term, on the conditional basis of receiving my GED certificate.

Learning as an adult has a new, multi-faceted meaning. I know now there is power in education, and how social studies, science, math, reading and writing weave its way into our everyday adult lives. Since returning to learning, my future is almost tangible.

The life I should have had will be whatever I want it to be.

## **Returning to Learning Changes Lives**

### **Sylvia Drier**

Perth-Andover Adult Learning Centre – Western Valley Adult Learning Association

<https://www.wvala.ca/>

Teacher: Karen Garnett

High school wasn't the best thing for me, especially when the principal was your cousin. I know some people think, "oh, she's your cousin, you could get away with a lot of stuff." No. We didn't have the best relationship. Anything I did was wrong. Detention and suspension all the time. Even for anxiety attacks, I was suspended for them. So after about the third time, my mother and I decided I wasn't going back and that I was going to do a GED instead. GED has so many opportunities. I'll be able to go to college, get a better job, and all together, it's just way better than high school.

One thing I've always wanted to be when I grew up was a photographer, and it stuck with me from that day on. To me, I find taking pictures of nature or animals is very peaceful. It's one of my happy places. My favorite thing to take pictures of I find would have to be reptiles or fish. FYI, my old snake Penelope was an amazing model. For me, capturing the perfect moment is worth millions. With my GED, I'll be able to go to college and fulfill one of my biggest dreams in my life.

Around Perth, there aren't many jobs you can get without your grade 12. You're either stuck with a cashier job, bag boy, or a slave at APD. Passing your GED will allow you to do all those jobs you couldn't do. You'll be able to work at places you never thought you could, like Cannabis NB, for example. All you need is your grade 12 or GED and two weeks of training. Then your working a good paying government job.

In GED, I don't have people judging me for the way I am or how I dress. I'm a weirdo and I own it, and I'm not afraid to show it. The teacher is one of the best and most supportive teachers I've ever met. If you have a problem, she's right there to help. If you need someone to talk to because your feeling down or not having the best day, she doesn't hesitate to take you in the other room to talk. It's honestly way better than high school here.

At the end of the day, it honestly doesn't matter if you have your GED or grade 12 or nothing at all. All that matters is that you're happy and doing what you want to do. You're always going to be judged anyway, whether you hear it or see it, people always will. You do you, that's all that matters.



## **Returning to Learning**

### **Angela Goodine**

Perth-Andover Adult Learning Centre – Western Valley Adult Learning Association

<https://www.wvala.ca/>

Teacher: Karen Garnett

Returning to learning changes lives. I went back to school to get my GED. It has made my life better in many ways. I hope someday to become a personal support worker after I get my GED.

When I was growing up, I was raised by my grandparents. My grandmother never allowed me to do anything or even go to school if there was snow in the forecast. When I did go to school and had homework, she would take it and do it before I even got a chance to look at it. She would also tell me all the time that I didn't know anything. Growing up as a kid and hearing that all the time really sinks into your head, and you start to believe that.

I did make it as far as grade 11, and then I quit. I thought back then that was the best decision for me. Now that I'm older and have three children myself, I returned to adult learning class to get my GED. My children praise me everyday and tell me I'm doing a great job, and they are proud of me. I come to class and love it. My teacher is awesome and for once in my life, I love to learn. I know I can do it, not only for myself, but also for my children.

Coming back to the adult learning class made my life better in many ways. I have a lot to look forward to like coming to learn new things everyday that I didn't think I was able to do when I was younger. I am showing my children you can do anything if you put your mind to it. Getting my GED will be a big accomplishment for me; in fact, it will be one of the biggest in my life.

After I get my GED, I would like to further my education and go on to get my PSW. I enjoy working with elderly and putting a smile on their faces. I also love letting them know that there is someone there for them that cares.

In conclusion, returning to school was a good decision for me! It has changed my life for the better.

## **Returning To Learning Changes Lives**

### **Dean Kinney**

Woodstock Adult Learning Centre – Western Valley Adult Learning Association

<https://www.wvala.ca/>

Teacher: Joanne Mclsaac

I dropped out of school at a very early age to become a truck driver. I never stopped to think what kind of an impact it was going to have on my future. Without a proper education today, it is harder to find steady, reliable employment.

After almost 30 years I decided to give up trucking and go back to school. It was like a weight had been lifted off my shoulders. Not having to deal with the high stress levels, of tight deadlines, and stress that comes with being a truck driver for so long.

When I decided to go back to school, I knew the first step to success was getting my GED. I have been working on it for the past 2 years. With the help of my instructor, Joanne Mclsaac, who has made it possible.

I have written and passed 4 out of 5 exams. I am now working on completing my math to finish my GED. I had the opportunity to do the student for a day and checked into the IT program. After setting in on the class for a day, I have been thinking about taking the course.

I am living proof that you are never too old to make changes, and better yourself. The one thing that I personally struggle with myself, is learning all over again. It is true what they say, it gets harder as you get older. However it is possible

## **Returning To School As An Adult**

**Tanya Landry**

New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre

Teacher: Gwen McConnell

It is a major decision to go back to school as an adult. For most people, it is too difficult to organize child care, obtain funding and find the courage to begin. In this essay, I will examine what led to this resolution in my case, how it has impacted my life, and my future goals.

First of all, I am proud of myself for joining a GED program while I am in jail for the first time in my life. At the age of forty-one, I hit a roadblock and my poor choices led to me sitting in a cell for the next eight months. I was feeling very depressed until I was offered the opportunity to go back to school while I am here. I had already graduated from high school and had my diploma from Compu-college. However, I thought refreshing my skills would be a good idea. Also, being in a classroom could get me out of my shell and make a positive change in my attitude.

Since that day, I have had a reason to get up in the morning, and it really helped my self-esteem. The mental stimulation felt good to me instead of drowning in my sorrows. Furthermore, the impact it is having on my life is nothing but positive. I have been learning valuable skills such as writing, social studies and mathematics. I even discovered that I am exceptionally strong in math.

Finally, although I have been a very hard-working single stay-at-home mom with my two beautiful daughters for the past ten years, they are growing up, and I believe that it is time for me to spread my wings and create future plans of my own. This GED program is a great transition from staying at home and getting out there to find a job upon my release. Getting off social assistance and, hopefully, making more money will give me independence and pride. I will be able to meet my pre-teen daughters' needs and wants when released from jail. I hope that I can earn their admiration and respect.

In conclusion, there are many strong reasons that I decided to start school again late in life. Since the chance to do so had presented itself, I decided to do so. The impact has been very positive, making my time in jail worth something. Hopefully, this decision will help me to obtain a satisfying and rewarding job, ensuring that my daughters and I will have a great future.

## **Returning to Learning Changes Lives**

**Kristi MacFarlane**

Woodstock Adult Learning Centre – Western Valley Adult Learning Association

<https://www.wvala.ca/>

Teacher: Joanne McIsaac

When I think about why I come back to school, I could give you a million reasons. The most important one is for myself. Sure I want to show my daughter no matter where you are in life you can always change and better yourself; life is a never-ending battle and you can never give up.

I am the eldest of 4 children; I have two sisters and a brother. My parents were split up and in new marriages. We lived with my mother full time and went to our fathers every other weekend. I do not remember anytime where either of my parents was involved with my schooling; never was I asked if homework was done, or how I was doing in school. When the bad grades came in, I was sure to hear how I need to try harder and improve. The funny thing about it all was not a soul was helping me. When I was in grade ten, I took up the love of Rugby. I enjoyed every minute of being on that field. You felt so free, and also it being an aggressive sport, you could blow off some steam without getting in trouble.

When I went into grade eleven, I was not doing so well with my grades. In this year the school really cracked down. If you were not doing well with school, no sports! What was I going to do? I can tell you that I didn't choose the right answer. I become angry and upset. How was I going to do that all on my own? I was sixteen, and I never believed in myself like I do now, and at the time felt I was just going to lose no matter what. I had a steady boyfriend, and like all other girls at that age, he was my world. As long as I had him I thought I was okay. Being in high school, you think you're in love, and they are your world. Well my world cheated on me. The next steps to follow would end my high school education. Like all drama filled teen aged girls, I blamed everyone who did not need to be blamed for his actions. I ended up having a physical altercation with the girl at school. I was suspended without a chance of going back. All of a sudden that adult life I was so eager to live was mine. I had to get a job. Well if I could step back in that clock, the only one getting a butt whooping would be ME!

I got pregnant with my daughter at nineteen. After I had her, I thought I could attempt to do my GED. Turns out when you have a new baby at home, and your running your house hold, there is no time to give yourself to work on the curriculum required to pass the test. I was living with my daughter's father at the time. He worked all day and at night I felt like I had two kids. That attempt at my GED was a failure again. I had no one but myself to blame for not standing up and asking for the help I

needed to succeed. When my daughter was eight months old, my relationship with her father deteriorated, and I packed our life up and returned to Millville where I would have the help from my family. I was only there a few short months when my maternity funding had run out; I was devastated. What was I going to do to provide for this child? My step mother had broken the reality to me that I would have to go on income assistance. My Pride and self-esteem went out the door that day; all I could think about is the bad stigma attached to being a "Welfare bum". All the while my parents reassuring me that it was temporary, and that I could not be too proud to feed my child. While being on income assistance, I found anyway to get off it. One afternoon I was searching schools that took mature students with no High school requirements. I came upon and Hair and Esthetics school where I would apply and later begin a Beautician Career. I was hired by my school to work as a part time stylist, while taking my esthetics course. I loved everything about making people leave feeling like a million dollars, I might not be having the best day but in some way I touched theirs. It still was not enough; I left the school for what I thought would be benefiting my daughter by me being close to home. She was starting preschool and being the proactive parent I wanted to be in close ranged if she needed me. it turns out that the shop I worked in was new, and with a new shop comes down falls such as building the most important part the clientele. In city's you have more of a population so many different services are preformed, not just cuts. It would turn out that I was not making ends meet with this job. I would have to pick up another one where I did bereavement for foster care. There was something still not making me happy, work followed me everywhere I went. I needed a job where I could go and come home shut the door and enjoy my daughter, not have fifty messages for a haircut at my house- not the shop. My friend was the manager of the Deli at Sobeys; at the time she was looking for someone. That person would be me!

I have always had a good work ethic I take what I do to heart, I learn quick, hands on, and in fast pace environment. I did not just not stay in that one department, I learned in different departments. My store manager would see my achievements, and push me to the next goal to advance in my career. When it came time to choose a manager for the department, it would happen to be it just was not my turn. It was at that moment I realized I worked hard to be in that line and did not get the golden ticket. If I could work that hard for a company with an unknown future why could I not apply that energy in to myself? It took one phone call to get the ball was rolling; all of a sudden I was going to school to get my GED, leaving my job; so many scary things all at once. In September of 2017 I started my journey with great success. I passed 4/5 courses. Math would appear to want to challenge me. I tried everything I could think of to help myself; I ended up calling my councillor, to see how she could help me. I was referred back to classes for math. I am thankful that Joanne McIsaac took the time to access my math skills. She has held me accountable for the questions I do not know; she explains clearly why it is right or wrong. She takes the necessary measures to make sure her

students are succeeding and not just letting them hurry through it to get it done. I am confident with her help I will become a successful High School Graduate. Even at the age of 32 it excites me to think I will graduate, I think more because my daughter will be watching me; also I will be throwing a big bag of rocks off my back when I become successful.

Never give up on yourself; you are the only thing stopping yourself. It's more than a piece of paper, it's like a key to a door you have not been able to open and now you're so close to the possibilities behind it are endless. Believe in yourself always and be proud of the journey that brought you here.

## **My Learning Journey**

### **Jocelynn Maillet St George**

Charlotte County Adult Learning Inc.

<http://www.ccalp.ca/>

Teacher: Anna Bates

To start to change my life, I had to make very hard decisions. At the age of twenty-four, and as the mother of a six year old, I made a huge life choice. I left Alberta and relocated here in New Brunswick - without my son by my side.

For years, I had been like a lost soul. After being a troubled teen, I had years of non-stop drug and mental health issues and run-ins with the law. I finally got to the point where I had lost everything but the clothes on my back. I was at the end. I had hit complete rock bottom. I even tried to overdose. After that, I was placed in a hospital by mental health for three weeks.

After I was admitted to the hospital, I went through several days of sickness and complete denial that I had any problems. But after four days of sobriety, around the clock therapy, and being constantly monitored, I decided to check the place out. I started to participate in meetings and groups and found myself asking questions and wanting answers. I realize now that this was the beginning of me turning my life around, when I started to listen and understand.

I knew that to get my life back on track, I'd need more support than I could get in Alberta. I went back to New Brunswick, where I had family and where I could build a support system and start to better myself.

I took a huge step in September 2018 when I enrolled in the Adult Learning Center in St. George. I knew that I needed a daily routine and structure. Now I go to classes Monday through Friday from 9am to 3:30pm. We have a small class, but it seems to be working for me. I've seen a pattern develop in my day-to-day life which is pure beauty. I have routine and purpose yet again.

If this GED program has shown me anything, it's that I can get an education. I like learning new things each day and am fully 100% committed. We had a tour at NBCC St Andrews, and I loved it! I even enrolled in the "Student for a Day" program and got a chance to experience what it's like to go there. I am determined to go to college one day. I know that nothing will stand in my way. I will succeed and create a bright future for myself and my son.

## Returning to Learning Changes Lives

### **Kassy McAdam**

Woodstock Adult Learning Program

<https://www.wvala.ca/>

Teacher: Joanne McIsaac

Close your eyes. People have grouped in flocks, yipping among themselves – Words have begun to blur as one giant buzz in your ears. The words they utter have no meaning to you. Your mind is not with them today. Eyes fixed on their royal blue gowns, every time one of them laughed or spoke the matching caps tassel would bob dancing;

*“I’m free”*

Banners, decoration, balloons, and lights liter the gymnasium, the once plain rafters had been transformed to a radiant galaxy, plastered with twinkling planets and stars – But they are not for you.

Busy to find seats, strangers rush around you; but what breaks the overcast isn’t the people whom have bumped into you or sneered;

*“Excuse me.”*

But the horrendous shrill the principal’s microphone embodies as it was brought to life by the hum of his words.

*“Good afternoon ladies, gentleman, staff, parents, relatives!”* His deep voice was loud and echoed through the crowded gym. By now everyone has chosen a seat; anxious students have taken their places behind the stage, awaiting the relief of their name being called. *“We are all here today to award these students with their long-awaited diplomas and congratulate them on their hard work and success!”*

You watch them enviously as each familiar face you’ve looked at every MondayTuesdayWednesdayThursdayFriday, 183 days a year for the last 13 years makes their march across the stage: barely able to contain the excitement pulsing through each step towards that ever so crucial sheet of paper; tremendously defining our futures. Enviously, you watch. Your name is not one to be called today. Enviously, embarrassed; how does it feel - watching as your classmates, your friends - graduate?

I think people often forget about the mental health issues that can be caused by lack of education or not graduating. Since returning to education my mental health has improved immensely. Lack of education doesn’t just cause employment and financial issues; it can cause depression, low motivation, low self-esteem and confidence issues,



poor social skills, anxiety, embarrassment, shame, guilt, isolation, fear of judgement and anger. Since continuing my education I've made many improvements in all of those aspects.

I would like to continue learning, I would like to find a way to use my creativity and passion for life to help and inspire others to seize opportunities and not run away, afraid of them because nobody is going to hand you your dreams you have to take them for yourself. I enjoy music and literature and aspire to be a Hip-Hop/ Rap style artist to combine both. I believe the type of music and message it delivers strongly influence mood and behavior, even confidence and energy levels. I hope to someday use my music to remind people their worth and goals; that they are obtainable no matter what they have gone through or struggle with; even something like getting their GED.

## **Returning to Learning Changes Lives**

### **Stuart McCann**

Oromocto First Nation Adult Learning Program – Central Valley Adult Learning Association

<https://www.cvala.ca/>

Teacher: Kelly Coleman

There are several reasons why I considered returning to school. It seemed that I was spinning my wheels in one spot, and I was in a major rut in my life. I knew if I went back to school, my life would only get better for me.

I started this journey by talking to an employment counsellor to hear my options, and we decided that taking my GED should be my first goal. This is how I ended up in Mrs. Kelly Coleman's GED class. By having Kelly in my corner, has made this experience comfortable as it has been. She is a great teacher and has tons of patience especially when it comes to math.

Taking my GED has been one of, if not the best decision that I've made in a very long time. I needed a boost you might say, and I got everything I needed at my OFN GED class. My confidence level has increased dramatically and just knowing I'm smarter than I thought, makes me feel good about myself. Getting to refresh all the skills that I thought I lost is a great accomplishment

My goals for myself have changed drastically since I started in the GED class. More and more doors will open for me as I get more education. Now that I am very close to completing my GED, the career I want to have has also changed. I was going to take the long-haul truck driving course, but due to some medication that I am on, I have decided to take a trade. I am thinking about taking the plumbing, electrical or carpentry course. Going to NBCC would not be possible for me without taking my GED.

I have to thank my teacher, Mrs. Kelly Coleman, or I'd have never gotten this far. She's a fantastic teacher, friend and all-around good person. She really cares about all her students and goes the extra mile for each of them.

## **Returning to Learning Changes Lives**

### **Donna McLeod**

Open Doors Harvest House School – South East Regional Adult Learning Program

<https://harvesthouseatlantic.org/>

Teacher: Robert Savoie

You are never too old to return to learning. It will give you a positive outlook on how it can change your life and help you achieve your goals for the future.

Returning to school is something that I have wanted to do for years. Some events have happened lately that have shown me that now is the time to make changes in my life. It's important to me to have a good education in order to be able to better my life and have a career.

Learning has given me a confidence in myself that I have been lacking for years. I never realized how much I enjoy learning new things and how many doors will be open to me in the future. Another thing learning has given me is the realization of goals that I want to reach and the tools to achieve these goals. It is important for me to have a career which I enjoy and which will help better my family as well as myself.

College is something that I have been thinking a great deal about. Accounting, office administration and veterinarian's technician are just three careers that would be perfect for me to achieve.

As I have already stated, education is a realistic avenue by which to obtain success. Understanding the importance of education and the positive way it can affect your life and achieve goals is what has helped me decide to return to learning.

## **A Long Road**

### **Pam Mealey**

Charlotte County Adult Learning Inc.

<http://www.ccalp.ca/>

Teacher: Anna Bates

In 1996, I was supposed to graduate from Fundy High School, but one day I got kicked out of class and was told I wouldn't be returning there after March break. They called my mom in for a meeting. During her meeting, I went around and handed all my books back, and I quit high school. High school wasn't easy for me as I was bullied, and I just hated going there. That made learning very complicated, and I lost all interest.

Two years later, I became a mom to a healthy baby boy. When he was two, I decided he needed a friend, and I had a healthy baby girl. My life then was trying to give them what they deserved, but I took a wrong turn in life, and I became an alcoholic.

So there I was, a mom of two innocent kids, and I was drinking just about every day. I was in and out of abusive relationships. I started working in a salmon production plant in 2010 to try and support them and get them through school. I started out as a production worker and eventually I became a quality control person, meaning I was responsible for a lot. I worked there for four years, and I left that plant to move to another salmon plant. Again, I started out in production work. Two years later, again I was back in quality control.

I was drinking everyday by then because I hated my life. All I wanted was for my kids to get through high school. Tyler hated school from day one, but in 2015 he received his diploma. Jenna always loved school; everything came easily to her, but in 2016 she went down a wrong road and didn't want to go to school. We started fighting daily because I was trying so hard to make her go, and I was failing. So between me drinking daily and fighting with Jenna, I kicked her out.

As time passed and it was getting close to the end of the year, Jenna wanted a tutor so she could finish the year. She did it! With the help of the tutor, she turned her life around and finished high school. As for me, there I was as an alcoholic stuck in a job I hated. I was miserable. I stopped caring about everything. I was in a rut and couldn't get out.

In February 2017, I started dating a guy who didn't drink. Things were going well until one night in August 2018. I had been drinking, and we got into a fight. He called his mom and left for the night. Then Jenna showed up and I was going crazy. We fought and cried and talked. Then I made the decision that I had to quit drinking, and I did!

I was still in a dead-end job, only this time I was back as a production worker. I didn't want this lifestyle anymore. So I then made the decision to enroll in an adult learning centre.

Returning to learning has helped me in so many ways. For one thing, I've learned that it's okay to ask for help. Also, it has helped me with my depression and anxiety. I used to have to struggle to get up and start every day, but since I started coming to classes, I feel so much better.

Returning to learning has also made me realize that I now want to take another huge step and further my education. I want to learn about Human Services, and maybe someday I can help people with mental illnesses.

## **Returning to Learning Changes Lives**

### **Angel Michaud**

Perth-Andover Adult Learning Centre

<https://www.wvvala.ca>

Teacher: Karen Garnett

The reason I returned to school is to prove to my children that education is very important for today's life. It is important to be able to get a good job. Another reason I've returned is to prove to myself anything is possible, that I can do this, and to feel better about myself.

Learning has changed my life in many ways. It will give me more options in life to better myself and to get a better paying job. Most of all, it shows my children that no matter what, you can always achieve your dream and your goals in life. Just go out there, work hard and you can do it.

After graduation I plan on going to college to follow my dreams in life. I hope to have a farm to help troubled children so they can find self-worth and self-esteem. To help children know their self-worth, to know they are as valuable as anyone else, and that they can also accomplish their goals in life is my dream for my future.

In conclusion, my coming back to school has many positive benefits for myself and for others. To keep learning is to teach, and to teach is to keep learning.

## **Returning to Learning: Changing Lives**

### **Saliha Muslum**

St. Mary's Community Adult Learning Program – Central Valley Adult Learning Association  
<https://www.cvala.ca>

Teacher: Joanne Wilson

When I say “education” it means a lot for me; it means hopes and dreams; it means a good life waiting ahead. I wasn't able to continue my schooling in Syria due to the war that started before I finished my high school. That made me feel sorrowful and disappointed. However, I always wanted to go back to school one day, but I didn't have the opportunity to do it.

When I moved to Canada, I realized that my thoughts about getting an education were right and more than ever today. Almost all the good jobs and a successful life need education, so I started looking for a way to begin schooling again. First, I started working hard to study the English language. Therefore, I began to take English classes at the Multicultural Association in Woodstock. It went really well for me and every day I learned more and more English. Until I got to the point when I was ready to do something else. So, I started looking for programs to attend. When I was speaking to the teacher in the Multicultural program, she recommended to me to take the GED program and that would help open doors for me to do whatever I want for studying. I asked about how the program works and it seemed interesting to me, so I decided to apply to take it. Now I am attending St. Mary's Community Adult Learning Program.

I think that my decision reflects well on my whole family, my children and my husband too, especially when they see me studying at my age. My husband also attends a course in bricklaying located in Woodstock. Our children will realize how important their education is for them and they will know that they need to do it sooner or later.

Therefore, I am still studying and I feel proud of myself. I am looking forward to finishing the GED and continuing my way to university. I plan to take the nursing program and become a successful and dedicated nurse.

Going back to learning has changed my life a lot; it has made it more interesting and challenging. I have come to realize that there is an exciting life waiting for me in the future. I can't wait!

## **How Returning To Learning Has Changed My Life**

**Kianne Nicholas-Perley**

Tobique Adult Learning Centre

<http://www.tobiquefirstnation.ca/education.html>

Teacher: Susan Howard

When I was 19, I decided to go back to school and get my GED. I forgot how much I missed learning and how important it is to have the skills I need to reach my goals. Returning to school changed my life.

One of the changes I discovered is a new love for learning. I learned how to create and manage a budget. This skill is important because I only receive one pay cheque a month and I had to learn to budget for groceries and household items. Budgeting is a real-life skill that I will use every day.

Returning to school also increased my training and work opportunities. Last summer, I was hired to do landscaping in my community. I was on time, dependable and learned how to fix and maintain the lawn equipment. This job would not have been available to me if I wasn't in the GED program.

Since I returned to school, I have more self-confidence than I ever did before. I set small short-term goals for myself. I get an amazing feeling of pride when I accomplish a goal I set out for myself. I have more confidence in applying for jobs and a lot more determination to succeed.

Returning to school change my life in the following ways: I rediscovered my love of learning, I have more opportunities and I have the self-confidence to reach my goals in life and succeed.



## **Returning to Learning**

### **Josh Nicholson**

Perth-Andover Adult Learning Centre – Western Valley Adult Learning Association

<https://www.wvala.ca/>

Teacher: Karen Garnett

Returning to learning has changed my life in a good way. Since I started my GED class, I have learned so much that I didn't know back when I was in school. In order for me to get a good paying job, I needed to back to school and work really hard on getting my GED. When I first started my GED class, I realized that I was not good at any subject. But after I worked and worked on the subjects, I started to understand my school work a lot better. After I get my GED, I would maybe like to go back out west to work and possibly live out there and have a fresh start.

I decided to go back to school after I dropped out and went out west because I couldn't get a good paying job without an education. It really sucks to walk around and hand out resumes all day and no one ever calls me back because they see that I have no education. When I moved back from out west, I moved to Perth where I enrolled in a GED class.

Coming back to get my GED and learning new things has changed my life because in school I could not comprehend anything or understand anything. After being in GED class for two years, I can understand a lot better now. In school, I was never good at any subject, but after starting my GED, I found out that I am actually quite good at math, which is really surprising.

When I get my GED, I would like to go out west, go to school for mechanics, and become a licensed mechanic. Some day I would like to open my own shop, and that way no one would get ripped off. If anyone goes to my shop for mechanic work, I will make sure it's done right, and if it's not done right, they will get a refund.

After dropping out of school, I decided to go back and get my GED. Going back to school has changed my life in a big way because I now have plans for my future. Being a math whiz will help me out a lot with that.

## **Returning to Learning Changes Lives**

### **April Rempel**

Bath Adult Learning Centre – Western Valley Adult Learning Association

<https://www.wvala.ca/>

Teacher: Beverley Haines

The reason why I am returning to learning, is to get a better paying job in the future. I hope to be a Personal Support Worker someday. I am really enjoying school work now. I have been out of school for nine years. I thought maybe school work would be hard to learn compared to our School Education. It is very hard to focus and can be very stressful. My teacher is very helpful at whatever you need help with; which is awesome.

How has learning changed my life? I am not sure yet that learning has done anything for me. The math and all the subjects, I thought it would be hard. I am not used to the curriculum here in Bath Adult Learning Program. I think the younger you are the better off.

Learning has changed my life by showing me different and new ideas. My eyes are opened up to this curriculum. there is a lot of learning.

I think that it will take years to get my learning done unless I prove to be very fast in my work and it could be getting easier as time goes by. I am also here five days a week from 8:30 am to 3:00 pm and as long as you keep steadily working and not goofing off things do get easier. It sure helps a lot if I keep focused on what I am doing.

Your goals for the future? My goals for the future are to be a Personal Support Worker. I think I would enjoy working with the elderly people and be a homemaker. They also need workers in New Brunswick or Manitoba. I think it would be nice paying job and worthwhile work. I wish that other people would be content and happy in their life. I am probably one that likes to be working all the time. When I am not busy I get very weird, start bugging any people around me and start climbing the walls.

So for me I need something to do otherwise I just go silly. I think my goal for the future could be a life changing moment.

## **Returning to Learning Does Challenge Lives**

### **Eric Sarchfield**

Woodstock Adult Learning Centre – Western Valley Adult Learning Association

<https://www.wvala.ca/>

Teacher: Joanne Mclsaac

There are many different stories why people don't finish their high school diploma. My story on the reason I quit in my senior year maybe not much different than most, but it has its own interesting parts.

The year I was supposed to graduate was 1992. I was in my senior year and had struggled to make it that far. It was a fact that my days in school I was tortured often by bullies for being different. I had a hearing problem, and I stuttered combined with my slower ability to pick up on school work that made me a target for bullies.

So just after Christmas break of my senior year I found out that I wouldn't graduate by 2 credits. I did finish the semester that year thinking on what was my next move. I did consider returning the next year to finish, but also I had a full-time job in retail. So I let work take over instead of me returning to school.

Now over the years I have had many different jobs like retail, restaurant, call center, and finally truck driver. These were survival jobs; something that I had to do just to live. I do remember being in the truck driving down the highway thinking that I should return to school, but here I was now 44 years old thinking that I'm too old to return to school. The deciding factor on me returning to school was in a news paper article in a New Jersey truck stop telling the story about this 86 year old lady in South Carolina who went back to school and got her GED. The article told the story about all her struggles and how she had over come them to finish her GED. The story was heartwarming. This made me believe that I could get my GED, and overcome my mind set, and my problems.

My journey on getting my GED was interesting. I applied to get into class and took the entry test. I did not do that great on the test, but I was determined to get started. I first started to work with Bradford Bell; this man helped me a lot. Bradford's first suggestion was for me to get my school transcript, and he set up a meeting for me to see a psychologist to see where my weak areas were in learning. After that appointment I had a better idea of my situation.

After starting class, my teacher Joanne Mclsaac is great. She started me on a low level so I would get the basics, and tested me often to make sure I understood the material. Also Bradford Bell set up with tutors to help me, and a meeting with Neil Squire's company to show me a way to use technology in helping me learn. Also Bradford and

Joanne set me up in computer classes with Peter Cudmore to help me with understanding that technology to improve my learning.

Returning to learning does challenge lives. Look at my story. I've been blessed. I have a lot of time and people invested in my success. I can't help to smile and be motivated. This experience has been fun, and I do have plans to continue my education after my GED. If there is anyone undecided about finishing their diploma just try it. I hope my story motivates only one person just like the 86 year old lady from South Carolina did for me.

## **Returning to Learning**

### **Trent Scott**

Perth-Andover Adult Learning Centre – Western Valley Adult Learning Association

<https://www.wvala.ca/>

Teacher: Karen Garnett

Hello, my name is Trent Scott. I have returned to learning because I want to better myself, and the best way I can do that is to get my GED certificate. I want to get a good trade, so I can make a better life for myself and get on with my life.

I have learned a lot since going back to school. I have a very good teacher, and I owe a lot of my learning to her because she has patience and understanding, and she never gives up on her students.

My goal for my future is to get my GED certificate, go to community college, and become a bricklayer and be my own boss.

I have been trying very hard to get my GED, but as I have learned, when you get older, it gets harder. But I am very determined to get my GED.

I will be very proud of myself for all the hard work I have put in for going back to school. By going back to school, I have learned I can now do anything that I set my mind to, and I can get back on track. I hope to become a bricklayer and have my own company.

## **Returning to Learning – Changes Lives**

### **Donna Thompson**

Basic Education & Skills Training – Saint John Learning Exchange

<http://www.sjle.org>

Teacher: Janelle Flanagan

Today I am writing an essay about my learning and how it changed my life. Life is full of wonderful learning experiences that plays on all of us. There are all kinds of people we learn from everyday through our life.

### My Story

I was born on September 26, 1960 in Saint John N.B. Fifth child down from top out of seven, six girls and one boy. Living on the Saint John River at Public Landing was where I played as a child and still to this day I go every chance I can. Swimming, boating, and fishing I do pretty much everything a country girl did. I enjoyed just doing hair since I was two years of age. My mother took pictures of me holding a big ugly orange brush. I was doing or wanting to do hair with this brush or using it as a microphone. Singing everywhere always singing.

My dad begged me not to go but at nineteen I thought I was all grown up “I was leaving”. I used to travel to Saint John at as I am driving us I first looked at the big city lights the feeling of adventure. Well it was great for a while. I went to Saint John Vocational High School taking hairdressing and working part-time at Centracare Hospital. My roommate and I had a wingding of a time!

Down on Main St is where we got the apartment and what a change from up the country. My eyes were shortly opened. What a change. I met this biker and he chased me for months and guess what, our comes number 1—first child, scared and alone and lost. No school, quit my job and started hitchhiking out west to be with my sister in Victoria, BC. Lynne, Kim and myself got lost in River du Luc, Quebec trying to get out of the thunder and lightning storm. Looking for barns or anything. Finally this gentleman picked us up and took us for supper. We hadn't eaten in 2 days. He got us a cabin and then talked us into going back home to the child's father whether I liked it or not. I was embarrassed but we gave it a whirl.

Number 2 child is born in 1982, I was running again so I gave him up for adoption. I was leaving town to Moncton, NB. It was one of the hardest things I ever did but at the time I felt it was right. Running with 2 children was just too hard. I was trying to get my hairdressing in Moncton. I was always learning and working and trying to raise my daughter the best I could. Moncton wasn't much easier. I was involved in two fires but I stuck it out as long as I could but then I could no longer stand it and had to go home.

Dad picked me up at the bus stop in Saint John with nothing but my bag, my daughter and a guitar. It was heartbreaking for him. I lived with my mom and dad for quite a few years after that. Only to get back out on with my own life going good, my ex-boyfriend Jack from age 14 popped back into my life. What a trip that was! One day we were out moose-sighting, we didn't see any moose, we scared them away, and we rocked the van! I got pregnant! I had to go back him. I was bedridden in hospital with toxemic poisoning. I was in labour all night and they thought it was pressure. The next morning I got up to use the bathroom and there was blood everywhere. I blew limbs up like tree trunks. They had to take tow beds, put a slab of plywood over it. I was in the dark, alone, scared with no visitors. I thought I was a goner. Well, 3 transfusions and I lived through it. I was so sick though. Well life goes on—new chapter.

### The Turnaround

Ashley was born in 1999—little angel she was but her father controlled me because I was too sick and he took advantage of the situation. I felt trapped and left once I felt better. I called Social Development for help and they took custody of Ashley and I lived in hiding for months so her father couldn't find me. Ashley has transitioned since then into Parker. We reunited and now I am living a dream come true. He, his sister Lisa, and my two grandchildren spend time together and love each other every chance we can.

Not knowing the right direction to turn when you are lost and alone and afraid you trust the wrong people. At the time you are in need and will grab anything and anyone who can help. Through the years I have met lots of people that I can also trust. At that time I was just reaching out for anyone. Once I looked at myself and got help, I was encouraged to keep going through different programs. I got on the right track in life and I have never given up.

Today, I am loved and I have wonderful people in my life. I have learned right from wrong, negative against positive choices through teachers, coaches and teamwork in school. These things give me the strength to keep going—to never quit. Since 2006 to present I'm always learning as I go through life's journey of ups and downs. Finding yourself and who you are is surprising. The outcome is shocking.

Loving, sharing and remembering the good times; keeping on a positive note and I never thought I would hear myself say this but who or whom you hang out with plays a part. Know who you are, keep learning, voice your opinions and questions and know there is help today.

## **Returning to School Has Changed My Life**

**Shelby Voutt**

New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre

Teacher: Gwen McConnell

Education is a very important asset in life. I would never say that one without an education is a failure; however, I would say that a person who does have their education has far more variety, opportunity-wise. That is one of the several reasons for returning to achieve my own education, another being that it leaves a great, positive effect on me.

First and foremost, I would like to say how confident I feel since my return to structured education time. The sensation within me when I know I have finally gotten the hang of something I worked very hard to understand is particularly satisfying. I would never have thought I would be able to say that I love to learn, but here I am, even helping others to understand! For example, I struggled to learn fractions but now I can do all four operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication and division) and have been teaching my friend Amanda, who seems to learn better from me than from our teachers! After getting discouraged time and time again after forgetting what I had been taught, like I did in the beginning, remembering feels great and now I know that when I encounter a new challenge, I will not panic but keep trying.

In addition to increased confidence, I quite enjoy my new awareness that I can go into almost any profession that I desire. Previously, I often complained about disliking my job and wishing that I could get a post-secondary education and an actual career. I would then be able to complete each day with pleasure rather than irritation. Since I chose to go back to school and obtain my diploma, I now have the wonderful option of pursuing the career that I wish to. I thought at one time of becoming a social worker but have decided that this work is not for me and now I am exploring my options.

Furthermore, I relish feeling successful and, in my opinion, success leads to true happiness in your life. That, for me, is working hard at what I enjoy doing and providing all of my family's needs and wants, comfortably. I never could have had the achievements that I have if I had not made the amazing decision of furthering my education.

In conclusion, I strongly feel that pursuing an education is one of the key components in having a successful, happy and rewarding life. I very much hope that I can convince anyone who has given up because they feel they are not good enough or smart enough, that they can do it. It is worth the effort and the outcome is life-changing.



## **Returning To School Is Changing My Life**

**Debra Wilson**

New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre

Teacher: Gwen McConnell

There is much to be said for a mature student who decides to return to school. It certainly takes courage and a strong desire for knowledge pertaining to a vast variety of subjects that have a great influence on your selection of a career. In this essay, I will explore why I returned to school, my difficulties and my goals.

To provide you with some information about my background, I never had the chance to enjoy my teen years. I became pregnant at fifteen; by the end of the same year, I had a second boy. I was a single mother, scared and overwhelmed, to say the least. I tried to stay in school, but I had no help and no confidence in myself. I made it partway through grade eleven but finally had to admit that I could not continue, so I became a drop-out. Living off social assistance, I was stuck in a revolving door, never getting ahead and making poor decisions. Then I became pregnant once again, this time with twin boys! Until the twins began school, I was a stay-at-home mom. I was tired of living off the system, cheque to cheque. I knew that, in order to be successful, I had to obtain my GED, but I could not seem to initiate the process.

I ended up in a dilemma. For the first time in my life, I made a serious mistake, resulting in finding myself incarcerated for one year. Many of the women here sit around doing nothing and feeling sorry for themselves. I decided, however, to not let my previous decisions dictate who I am and rise above my situation; I decided to seize this opportunity to return to school. I wanted to be a good role model for my boys by showing them that, if you go to school and successfully make it to the end, you can achieve your dreams and goals in life. Furthermore, I knew I would have to be dedicated in order to be successful. I needed to have perfect attendance, be attentive inside the classroom, do all homework and receive at least eight hours of rest per night.

I have some obstacles in my way, such as extremely poor eyesight, ADHD and a learning disorder. Nonetheless, I did not let that deter me; I attend school regularly, keep a positive attitude, (even though at times I have wanted to give up), do all assignments and do my best. I can now study proudly and with the utmost confidence in my achievements. I am scheduled to write four of the GED exams in April, and I believe I will be on the way to achieving my high school equivalency. Even if I fail all the tests, I will try again. When I succeed in obtaining my GED, my next step is to gain acceptance at a trade school and become a plumber. Then I can look back and feel proud of myself for changing my life and the lives of my sons.

In conclusion, I suggest to all you adults who are serious about your educational goals and possess the qualities I have previously mentioned, that you need to obtain your GED. Your teachers will, no doubt, see your willingness to learn and, if you do not give up, then the teachers will not give up on you, and they will be there through all your positive changes.