## **Dianne Smith**



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Recently we met with Dianne Smith, owner/operator of Smith Lodge, a licensed community care facility in Charlottetown. Dianne was a recipient of a Literacy Alliance bursary.

Dianne was born in Pleasant Valley and has lived all her life on the Island. She has a twin brother David and is the daughter of George and Dorothy. She attended school in Pleasant Valley, South Granville and Hunter River. Before completing high school Dianne decided that education was not necessary to her and she quit school to go to work.

Now she says "in hard times you need certificates".

In 1986 Dianne was a single parent of a two and a five-year-old and she needed to make a living and set an example for her children.

She worked cleaning houses, gardening, growing bean sprouts and cleaning wild geese. One time she ran a small farm while the owner was in hospital.

When she won the PEI Literacy Alliance bursary in 1998, she used the money to attend Spell-Read Canada. In February 1999 she took the GED preparation course through night classes at Holland College. She continued her house cleaning work in the days while she attended night classes.

Dianne can't say enough about her night school instructor Kent Pond. "He went out of his way to help his students" she says. "Everyone in his class passed the test".

Dianne proudly says that she wrote and passed her GED test the day before she turned fifty. She felt it was time for a change in her lifestyle. She took a First Aid course and found out about a Home Care course through the Red Cross. She did her on-thejob training at a licensed community care facility. She enjoyed the work and decided that she would like to have her own facility.

With Doreen Andrews of Anderson Lodge as her mentor, she was able to find and purchase a three story home in Charlottetown. She worked hard to renovate the facility and get her community care licence. Now she has seventeen residents including people with disabilities and elderly people. Her chef was trained at the Culinary Institute and she has an RN on her staff. Her lodge is in demand and she has a waiting list.

When asked about challenges she faced Dianne says getting the money to buy the building was a struggle because there are no grants available for such a facility. She ended up putting a mortgage on her own home to come up with the down payment.

Dianne loves her new job as owner/ operator. She likes working for herself, working with people and she has a wonderful staff. As a bonus she can live on the third floor of her facility.

Dianne has a dream to expand the lodge. She says that she always remembers that she is working for the residents and wants to provide them with a happy and healthy home.

Dianne's advice to others is simply "If you want to do something badly enough you can do it. If you are in a rut and don't think you can afford time for a two-year course, you'll still be in the same rut two years later."

She wants to thank all the people who have supported her in realizing her dream including instructor Kent Pond, friend and tutor Linda Fitzgerald, her parents and family.

Dianne can be reached at Smith Lodge on Weymouth Street in Charlottetown at 902-892-4220.