

Norma Stack



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Norma Stack of Montague is a winner of a PEI Literacy Alliance adult bursary.

I went back to school for a couple of reasons. I hope to attain my GED certificate, to feel better about myself and to give myself a greater chance to get a higher paying job.

About eight years ago, I dropped out of school. I wasn't getting along well at home, so I moved out. I moved to Montague and shared an apartment with my cousin. I tried to balance school and work, but school lost out and I went to work full-time. I thought that I could get enough hours for EI and then go back to school. As time went on, the thoughts of school grew distant.

At the age of nineteen, I was married, had a baby and was living in Vernon, BC. After my baby was born, I decided to get my GED. Every time I planned to enrol something would come up. My health wasn't good and I had to have an operation. After I recovered, my son was just over one year old, he too needed an operation. He had been sick with ear infections since birth. Things only got worse from there. My marriage was in trouble. I gave my all to try and make it work but after having been separated three times and feeling like a failure, I packed up my son and moved home.

After we moved to Montague, I started to work as a security guard. I worked 8-12 hour shifts, five to six days a week. I was not seeing my son enough and working those hours, I wasn't taking good care of myself. This went on for a few months. Then my son was having behaviour problems and was sick all the time. I started missing work every two to three days. I was very concerned about my son's health, the bills were adding up and money was running out. My family doctor couldn't find what was causing my son's sickness. At that point, I felt at my lowest. I was crying all the time.

After a few months, I started to see some sunshine. Some truly wonderful people were introduced into our lives. These people were from different family support groups. They helped find the right doctors who told me what was making my son sick. They also helped me understand about his behaviour. He had to have his tonsils and adenoids removed. As for his behaviour, he has ADHD. Between his medication and counselling, he's doing much better.

Now that things were looking up, I decided I wanted to better myself and further my education. I was scared. I didn't think I was smart enough to do it. Then a good friend said to me, "Norma, you are smart and very capable of getting your GED. You deserve it." My partner has also been very supportive of my decision to go back to school. "The only way one fails at something is when you don't try," he said. So with those things in mind and the encouragement of my friends and family, I enrolled at Holland College.

I am very proud of myself now. My first few days I was really nervous and wasn't sure if I would like it there. I do enjoy being there. My instructors are super. Hopefully I will be ready to write my GED in May and if I don't get it the first time I won't give up. I feel good about myself right now, just being in school. I won't cheat myself out of the joy I know I will feel when I finally achieve my goal.

- Norma Stack