

Master Packaging Scholarship Award 2023

Essay by scholarship recipient, Matt Perry

My journey to achieve my education and learning goals has been a long one. I left high school in grade 11 at 15 years old. I had been struggling through the semester and promised myself and my family that I would return the following semester. That didn't happen. I entered the work force full time and left my education on the back burner, a decision I regretted for a long time.

A few years down the road, when I was 29, it became an important priority for me to show my children that it wasn't too late to "go back to school." I wanted them to see how important education is and encourage them to achieve their goals.

I began attending Holland College Adult Education and quickly obtained my GED. It was an amazing feeling to have that diploma. I was very proud. I returned to the workforce at that time.

Ten years later, I was unemployed and unsure of what I wanted to do. I started taking a few open academic courses at Holland College to explore some options, then I saw an advertisement for a program sponsored through the PEI Literacy Alliance; "Essential Employability Skills Health Sector" course.

I had always wanted to work in a job helping people, often thinking about going into healthcare in some capacity. I thought this course might be able to assist me in getting a start. I applied and was accepted.

I learned a lot throughout this course. The facilitators were positive and encouraging, and a tremendous help to my success in the program and supportive through some personal struggles. I have enjoyed returning as a guest speaker to talk to the new classes about where the Essentials course has taken me.

While completing this course and the work placement, I made the decision to enroll in the Resident Care Worker program at Marguerite Connolly Training Center. I graduated in the spring of 2022, and have been employed with Health PEI, working in the Mental Health and Addictions division as an RCW and Addiction Worker since.

This past summer I began a new journey to further my career and continue to care for and help those struggling with addictions and mental health challenges; I enrolled at UPEI in the Bachelor of Integrated Studies, concentrating in psychology.

I am now 42 years old, attending UPEI while continuing to work full time with Health PEI. I have overcome many personal and learning obstacles through the years while pursuing my goals; but it has all been and will continue to be worth it.