

Mental health issues an inspiration for Champion

Story by Rob Rombouts

Photo by Blackbird Photography

Overcoming obstacles made **Melissa Gariepy** a champion in more way than one.

Melissa has struggled with depression and anxiety for years, and her efforts to deal with the effects of mental health issues, inspired her to work in the community and advocate for others.



Melissa has struggled with depression and anxiety during her high school years. Dealing with these struggles left her without a diploma, and despite attempts to go back to school, she was not able to complete it.

Living “paycheque to paycheque” on [Ontario Disability Support Program](#) (ODSP) payments, Melissa decided she needed a change, and enrolled in the Community Service Worker program at [Medix](#). Despite challenges she faced, including being a single mother of four children, Melissa completed the program with support from her family and she said the experience opened a door for her.

“Being in the course helped me deal with my depression,” she said. “This time, it felt like it was what I was supposed to be doing.” Melissa wants to use her education to work in addiction and mental health counselling. Inspired by her own experiences, she feels other people may need the inspiration to know they can achieve their goals.

Education Works Alliance is a community group dedicated to building prosperity through training, education and lifelong learning. The group’s mandate is to raise the education, literacy and skill levels of Grand Erie residents, in order to broaden opportunities for employments and economic development. For more information visit www.educationworks.ca