

Honouring her father's legacy

Story and Rob Rombouts
Photo by Blackbird Photography



It is hard to underestimate the powerful influence of parents.

When **Cheyenne Arseneault** was 13, her father passed away, and her life went off the rails.

"I felt like the most important person in my life left without asking if it was OK," the Brantford resident said. "I rebelled and chose what I wanted to do, as opposed to what I was supposed to do."

When she left secondary school, she only had four credits toward her diploma.

Cheyenne worked odd jobs, but did not have a job "she wanted to do for the rest of her life." She always thought about going back to school, but lacked motivation.

Becoming a parent herself gave her that motivation. After the birth of her son, Jaziah, Cheyenne started the [Grand Erie Learning Alternatives](#) (GELA) adult education program full-time at the City Centre campus in Brantford, with plans to

enter the Personal Support Worker (PSW) program. Finding daycare was a concern, as was finding time to be an involved parent. She participated in the [LEAP \(Learning, Earning and Parenting\)](#) program through Ontario Works, and took advantage of parents' programs and activities in the community.

She completed a placement and decided the PSW field was not for her. She has now applied to the Early Childhood Educator program at [Mohawk College](#).

"Once I was pregnant, there was no turning back," she said. "I wanted to be everything he needed me to be and someone to look up to at the same time."

While she initially had difficulty getting a grasp on school again, going back has been "like a breath of fresh air," and has made her feel good about herself.

She feels that going back to school is "continuing my father's legacy by succeeding instead of failing."

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