

Grand Erie Learning Alternatives offers a second chance to be role-models

Story by Rob Rombouts

Photo by Blackbird Photography

Sometimes there are second chances in life.

For many of our champions, adult and continuing education programs gave them a second chance to complete their Secondary School diplomas and be better role models for their children. Their experience has set them on the path to more education or better paying jobs.



Jessica Barker left school at 17 because she “wanted to make money and hang out with my boyfriend and friends.”

When she gave birth to her daughter, the Brantford resident decided she had to make a better life for her. “I couldn’t tell her to stay in school if I wasn’t leading by example,” Jessica said. She spent two years raising her daughter, understanding that the early years of a child’s life are crucial, and then she returned to school. To pay for day-care costs, Jessica even took on a part-time job, even though her husband had a good-paying job.

Jessica went to [Grand Erie Learning Alternatives](#) to finish her Grade 12, and then took the PSW certificate program. Unlike her previous school performance, Jessica excelled, and is currently employed in three different jobs.

Looking back, Jessica said: “I was too cool for school. I feel stupid for the time I wasted. Now I feel accomplished for what I’ve done. Everyone should feel this way. I’m doing something with my life.”

And she is not done with her education. She said she is a bit obsessed with school now and wants to get as high in the health care field as she can. She already has plans to train to be a registered nurse.

Jessica is expecting a second child soon, and her husband is going back to school as well.

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