

## To live and learn, step out of your comfort zone

Story by Rob Rombouts

Photo by Blackbird Photography



“Fear will paralyze you,” said **Marnie Knight**. “I’m a firm believer that you don’t look backward, because you’re not going that way.”

The past five years of her life show that Marnie, a Selkirk resident, takes those messages to heart. Her marriage of 27 years ended in divorce, she was diagnosed with breast cancer, and due to effects of the cancer treatment, she could no longer work as a cook.

“I had five years where everything went wrong. I didn’t know what I was going to do,” she said. “It’s not what you expect at 57.”

Left without work, Marnie went to Service Canada Employment Centre in Simcoe, and was told about Second Career. She was sent to [St. Leonard’s Community Services](#) in Dunnville, where the staff helped her determine her path, and provided assistance on the way. She upgraded her high school courses through the College and Career Preparation Program at [Mohawk College in Dunnville](#).

Marnie enrolled in the Social Service Worker program at [Niagara College](#). She soon found she was struggling to complete the work. She was tested and diagnosed with a learning disability, and the school provided her learning supports, changes that made “a world of difference.” Now in the second year of the program, Marnie is achieving excellent grades.

And her learning isn’t just taking place in the classroom. During the summer of 2012, Marnie travelled to Kenya through the [Speroway](#) project. She volunteered in an orphanage and travelled around the country meeting with Kenyans and learning about their education system. She has plans to return to the country, and her long-term goal is to setup a scholarship fund for children and adults in Africa.

Where others may have given up, Marnie saw a new opportunity to experience life, and she challenges others to do the same. “If you can’t step out of your comfort zone, you’re existing, not living,” she said. “You’ve got one life. Grad hold and run with it, as hard and as fast as you can.”

“It’s been an incredible journey, these last five years, and I wouldn’t trade it for anything.”

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*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](http://www.educationworks.ca)*