

## Alternative Education the key to his success

Story and photo by Rob Rombouts



**Trevor Lawrow** has come a long way.

He is in the second year of the Social Service Worker program at [Conestoga College](#), with an A+ average, and has plans to attend the [University of Waterloo](#) to complete a bachelor in social work. But just a few years ago Trevor was a drug-addicted high school drop-out serving time in jail.

While Trevor was in jail, his mother had a massive heart attack, and had a very small chance of survival. Just a few months before, she had been told she was very healthy, so the heart attack came as a huge shock.

Facing the possibility of his mother's death, Trevor "was thinking I either wouldn't be able to go to the funeral, or I would go in an orange jump-suit, in hand-cuffs with two police officers." Trevor's mother survived but he blamed the heart attack on the stress he caused his family. He decided to change his life.

"Everyone says you have to hit rock bottom. I was beyond rock bottom," Trevor said. "I didn't care how my choices affected me, but I didn't realize how they were affecting the people around me."

When Trevor was released from jail, he started the [School Within A College](#) (SWAC) program at [Fanshawe College in Simcoe](#). Despite applying late, he was let into the program, and was able to complete the 10 credits he needed for his secondary school diploma, while earning four college credits at the same time, through the dual-credit aspect of the program. Trevor thanked Lisa Dove and Lauralee Giliberti for letting him into the program; if he wasn't able to get into the program, he believes he probably would have not gone back to school at all.

With his personal experience to drive him and provide first-hand knowledge, Trevor completed a Human Services Certificate at Conestoga and then enrolled in the Social Service Worker program at the same school. Due to his hard work and perseverance, Trevor earned high marks and received scholarships to pay for his tuition and books. He enjoys his studies, and he feels his history can make him more empathetic and will help him understand what people are going through. Noting that, as a male, he is a minority in his chosen field, when he graduates he wants to act as a strong influence and role model for young males, to help set them on the right track.

Trevor thinks the alternative education approach of SWAC was integral to his success. "They build schools to fit the majority of people, but not everyone fits into those moulds, or can learn in those environments," he said. "The alternative programs are for people that don't fit. Instead of getting left behind, people can finish their education."

For Trevor, education is the foundation of a good life and a good career, and he means to help others build their own strong foundation for future success.

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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)*