COUNTY of INVERNESS

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Partici~Paper

Covering culture, heritage, recreation, physical fitness, tourism, and community activities in Inverness County since 1979.

L-R. Cora Guest of Port Hood, mother of Rosemary; Rosemary Guest, award recipient for the highest score on the Provinicial GED Examination: Francene Gillis, GED instructor in Port Hood; George Cambell, Continuing Education Regional Representative.

"FOR ME, A STEPPING STONE"

Rosemary Guest was presented with an award last week for achieving the highest score in Nova Scotia for the Provincial GED Examination. The award was presented at the Court House in Port Hood, by George Campbell, Regional Representative for the Department of Vocational and Technical Training. An award presentation was also made by Helen MacDonald of The Inverness District School Board. GED in Inverness County is part of the Adult Education Program administered by the Department of Recreation and Tourism, directed by John Cotton. It is under the auspices and supervision of John MacIsaac. Assistant Superintendent of the District School Board.

"FOR ME, A STEPPING STONE"

by Mary Anne Ducharme

For 26 years, Rosemary Guest got along without her highschool certificate. "It never really handicapped me as far as getting a job," she said in a recent interview. "At least, I didn't think that it did. In the 60's, jobs were easier to get, and with my typing course in Halifax, I was able to get secretarial work."

But to her way of thinking, something was missing -- an incompletion in her life, and not just because of that long-ago United States History class that kept her from a diploma. "I went to the GED class for personal satisfaction, to prove to myself that I could accomplish a grade twelve level. But there was a mental hurdle to overcome: the fear that I would fail!"

During GED classes offered in Port Hood, and instructed by teacher Francene Gillis, Rosemary was daunted by two things. First of all, she began to realize how poor her skills were in English, and that there were areas of studies included in GED that were not part of the curriculum when she was in school. "So much of it was new to me," she said, "and I was afraid that I didn't know how to study."

Rosemary speaks highly of GED teacher Francene Gillis who she describes as the driving force behind the GED program in Port Hood. "She gives her students a positive attitude and faith in their ability. More than that, she has so many stimulating ideas in education and is able to spark discussions. I became more aware, especially about language and how it is used in the media."

When it came time for the Provincial Exam, Rosemary, and all the students in the class, suffered gitters --the old fear of failure. Again, it was Francene who imparted the fortitude to go on. 'What do you have to lose?' she would say. 'Yes, you CAN do it!'

And Francene was right. Rosemary received one of the highest scores in North America in 1986 -- out of 700,000 who completed the test in the United States and Canada. In Nova Scotia, 25,00- have acheived grade twelve certification so far in GED and Rosemary scored the hightest in the Province in 1986. In four subject areas, she scored in the 99th percentile, and in one other, she scored 98%. Douglas

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"FOR ME, A STEPPING STONE"

R. Whitney of the American Council on Education sent her a letter congratulating her on her success story. She will be one of 70 in North America to be honoured by a National Award.

"For me, GED was a stepping stone," Rosemary said. "I have overcome the fear and insecurity that I felt before. I am ready to go on and I wish that there were college courses available in local communities. For now, I'm signing up for a computer class. Anything is possible!"

No one has to be

STUCK FOR LIFE

by Mary Anne Ducharme

(The following 'story' is not based on an actual person. But it could be you, or someone you know.)

John MacGinty is now thirty five years old, and he quit school at the age of 15. There were many reasons why he dropped out. His father died in a fishing accident, and his mother, overwhelmed with raising several small children and caring for a household, could not work outside the home on a regular basis. John, being the oldest, was saddled with responsibilities beyond his years. Gradually, out of step with his classmates and progressively ill-prepared for the academic workload, he pressured his mother to allow him to take his father's place on his uncle's fishing boat. Needing the income, she agreed readily, especially since John had never been a good student, anyway, and did not like school.

For many years, John never gave much thought to returning to school,but had begun to think of himself as stuck for life in a pattern he could not change. He knew others in the same situation: work in summers, winters on pogey, always short of cash and with little or no stimulation for his mind.

He couldn't read newspapers or highway signs, or fill in applications, or even read the labels on prescriptions. When he married, he told his wife that he had poor eyesight but he refused to wear glasses on the grounds that he would never be able to get used to them, that they would 'be in his way.'

Several times he had seen something on television about the Each One Teach One Program. At first, he scoffed at the thought because he was 'too old', but when he learned that the teaching was completely confidential and private, he began to scheme about how he could arrange to take the Laubach class without his wife knowing. He was also sure that if the men he worked with found out, he would be the butt of jokes and he would not be able to face them. Years went by, however, and he let the thought pass, mainly because he did not know how to make the arrangements with an instructor without letting his family know.

One day, a friend called him and asked to talk to him on a private matter, and John arranged to have lunch with David. who had been a classmate long ago before John dropped out of school. After much tactful persuading and encouragement, David was able to enroll John in the Laubach course he was teaching. No one besides themselves knew or suspected that John was learning to read for the first time in his life-- learning at his own pace with the undivided attention of a trained and skilled teacher. John was deeply grateful to this true friend who had taken that first step -- the one that he had been afraid to take for himself.

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THE GED PROGRAM: PERSONALIZED ADULT EDUCATION

by Mary Anne Ducharme

"There are many obstacles that prevent some people from achieving a highschool diploma," says GED instructor, Francene Gillis.
"And often, the reasons have nothing to do with ability. I often see people in GED who have been in the work force, or homemakers, for many years. They are adults who have learned a lot in daily living, whether in books or not. While I realize that coming back to the classroom is hard to do, and that the word 'study' is intimidating, I also know that these are intelligent and committed people. They have been involved in families, jobs, community work -- and they have the courage to upgrade their education, even though it will take time and effort. I really respect that."

Francene Gillis thinks of herself as a 'guide' for her students, for she insists that she learns as much from them as they do from her. "I'm also a little bit like a cheerleader for them, giving them confidence. For many, the biggest problem is not lack of ability, but lack of confidence."

In the GED program, each student is given a preliminary test to assess strengths and weaknesses. The course is then custom-designed for each person who can work at a pace suited to individual needs. The work is monitored by the teacher with individual help in areas that each student finds difficult. "If someone needs ten weeks on fractions, that is what he does," says Francene. "Someone else may need only a few days to refresh in that subject. Each student sets his own goals and works at his own pace. He may want to upgrade by one, two or three grades, or he may want to go the whole way to grade 12."

The program touches on many areas, some of which some students may have missed entirely in highschool because of the way classes were scheduled. There are five subject areas which umbrella several others. For instance, social studies encompasses geography, history, modern world problems and economics. The other subject areas include reading, writing skills, science, and math. How the class is taught is a matter of individual choice by instructors each time, depending on the needs and skill levels of the students involved. Often the classes combine lecture, individual work, and personal teacher assistance, with the added stimulation of informal class discussions.

At the completion of the course, a six-hour Provincial Examination is given, which is mostly in a multiple choice format. The results are mailed directly to the individual students in a very private manner, and even the instructors do not know the results. This exam may be attempted repeatedly until grade 12, or whatever level is desired, is reached.

"Some GED students go on to further studies in universities and enter professions," says Francene. "Others are satisfied because they have achieved, and because they have strengthened their faith in their own abilities."

Partici-Paper

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