



College Matters

College Matters, Fall 2002

Message from the Editor

Past editions of "College Matters" have focused on information for preparatory program teachers and administrators. This "College Matters" is launching a new initiative - a focus on the students because they are what really "Matters".

We are presenting profiles on seven students from around the province who started their program this fall. We asked what led them back to school, where they are hoping to go and how they feel as they start this difficult and challenging journey.

They will be interviewed again in January and June to track their personal and educational progress. We hope that you find these profiles interesting and share them with students in your programs. I know as I wrote these profiles I was moved and inspired by their stories and optimism.

Algonquin College - Scott Valois

"I'm more confident in my work and I feel great knowing I'm on the right track for my future."

Scott left high school after Grade X and has returned to school to make a better life for himself. He felt he could work all his life to make other people rich or to make himself rich. He knows that education is the first step to escaping minimum wage jobs with no benefits.

Scott felt he was too old to go back to high school and after an interview with the Algonquin Academic Referral Centre was particularly pleased he could start immediately at no cost. He is planning to enroll in Small and Medium Business Management, a two year diploma program. He started in LBS 5 and must complete OBS IV communications, computers and math. Already he has completed the computer prerequisite.

He initially felt the two week orientation was a waste of time. He was anxious to get started. Now he appreciates that it helped him get "up to speed" faster especially the math review. He is happy to be in class with others who know why they are there and have goals. He was disappointed that he would not be obtaining a high school diploma, but he is satisfied that he will be getting what he really wants - entry to post secondary.

Scott lives with his girlfriend's parents who are very supportive. He works part time for her father and has been able to reduce his work commitment to Satur- days only. Once he completes his

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

[Message from the Editor](#)

[Algonquin - Scott Valois](#)

[Canadore - Tasha Roy](#)

[Conestoga - Kimberly Wilson](#)

[Durham - Shital Potel](#)

[Fanshawe - Carrie](#)

[Northern - Shawn Joly](#)

[Sheridan - Allen Kayes](#)

*This month's
Freudian slip is "curse
outlines"*

studies his girlfriend will be returning to school. He reads on the bus and has quiet time to study before the others get home.

People in his life are very proud of him. He has discovered he enjoys writing stories about the interesting things that have happened in his life, and his teacher is really encouraging him. His self-esteem and confidence have improved significantly.



Scott is enthusiastic, "I'm more confident in my work and I feel great knowing I'm on the right track for my future." He has clearly made an impression on his teachers, "It is a teacher's pleasure to facilitate and assist a student like Scott who has a lot of potential and just needs to be guided in the right direction. With Scott's enthusiasm and positive attitude, I know he will be successful in whatever he pursues. Keep up the good work Scott!".

Canadore - Tasha Roy

Tasha Roy is a 21 year old single mother who has been out of school for 6 years. She left school before graduation because of her pregnancy, but her life had been difficult long before that. Tasha was the first youth, at 14, to be admitted to the North Bay Detox Centre. She has been clean for 7 years! and plans to enter the 2 year Drug and Alcohol Counselling Program at Canadore.

She heard about the program from her boyfriend's mother, a former Canadore teacher, and was motivated to enroll for a number of reasons: personal growth, a desire to be a good role model for her boys and a recognition that post secondary education is necessary to get a good job. She worked in a nightclub after leaving school as well as volunteering at the YMCA and the North Bay Museum and Arts Committee. Of course her biggest job was raising two boys aged 2 and 3. Tasha's hobbies are dance, hiking and painting.

Tasha thought about entering the program for a year before registering. She knew it was important to ensure her personal life was in order, particularly daycare arrangements. She feels taking this time to organize was important along with carefully thinking through the decision and asking herself, "Am I ready to be here?"

Her biggest concern before she started was "taking the bus to school"! She also has a documented learning disability in math and anticipates this subject will be the most challenging. She started in LBS 4 communications and 3 math and will have to complete LBS 5 math and OBS IV communications. Testing makes her anxious, but she is trying to take it as it comes.

Her family has been very supportive. Although her father is unsure of how to respond, her mother is "bragging" to her co-workers. Tasha knows she has to get rid of the negative influences in her life and look at the "big picture" especially her "long term" goals and how school fits in. She is able to work at home once the boys are sleeping.

During the first week, the best thing was proving to herself she could get to school and get things accomplished. The worst was a confrontation with someone from her past. She has made some new acquaintances and at the end of the first three weeks is still certain of her training goal and feeling more confident she can achieve it.

Tasha says, "Determination will be my Foundation for Success". Her teacher says, "Tasha is a pleasant person who appears to be committed to achieving her goal of entering the Drug and Alcohol Counselling Program. She seems grateful for the opportunity to return to school."

Conestoga -Kimberly Wilson

Kimberly, a 30 year old, has been out of school for 13 years. She lives with her partner and 17 year old stepson. Drug abuse resulted in Kimberly leaving school. She was never encouraged as a child to do well in school, but all that has changed. Now she is self motivated to do well. She has goals to work towards, a good support system and wants things in life. She recognizes that the first step is working on her education.

Kimberly is currently enrolled in the Focus for Change Program at the Waterloo Campus. She was especially interested in the self-esteem portion of the program. Kimberly thought about coming to school for five months before attending an information session. During this time, her "lack of self confidence surfaced". She was afraid that by going back to school she would find the answer to the question of "how smart" or "not smart" she is.

Kimberly's most immediate barrier is money, but she also knows her lack of confidence holds her back. She is easily distracted and must often ask her teachers to repeat information. She knows that math and communications - especially grammar - will be a challenge, but she is confident in her verbal skills. She is starting in LBS 3 communications.

Kimberly returned to school because she wanted to succeed at something for the first time in her life. She knew her first step was addressing her drug addiction. Clean and straight for 8 months she has changed her life style and attends meetings regularly. She is also attending after care sessions in anger management. She says she is ready to meet any obstacles and believes taking the time to address her personal barriers was critical before starting school.

Kimberly is interested in woodworking, music, children, sports such as hockey and baseball and Nascar racing. She is planning to complete her upgrading and enroll in Social Services. Ultimately she would like to pursue a career in law enforcement as a police or corrections officer.

Kimberly's family was initially overwhelmed by her decision, but are convinced it is a positive change which they support. Her home is quiet, and she has an excellent environment for studying and learning. She is confident about tests if she has an opportunity to prepare and is interested in the subject.

Her greatest fears before starting the program were both failing and succeeding, but her first week was positive and encouraging. It gave her the opportunity to realize that she was smarter than she thought. Changing her daily routine was the most difficult task.

Durham-Shital Patel

Shital is a 19 year old woman whose immediate family lives in Africa; her aunt in the United States and her uncle in Oshawa. She returned to Canada after an eight year absence. In June 2002, she completed her O and A levels. She was in the final cut for a National Tennis Team and enjoys water polo, basketball and hockey.

Shital returned to school to improve her math skills after reading about the program in the college calendar. She has applied to the Legal Administration Program at Seneca College for January 2003. Ultimately Shital would like to continue in a university law degree program.



She sees her weak math skills as well as OSAP residency guidelines as barriers to entering post secondary. She is starting in LBS 3 math and will have to complete OBS IV by January. She is also concerned about the possibility of not getting into her post secondary program especially in this double cohort year as well as whether her international documents will meet Canadian standards or prove to be a barrier.

Her mother and father are very supportive and want her to be successful in whatever she chooses to do. Her aunt and uncle are pressuring her to succeed, but they would like her to change her goal. Although she has no interest in science, they are recommending she pursue sciences to leave all avenues open. If she is not in her post secondary program by January, her family has advised her she will be returning to Africa." For Shital there have been major adjustments - especially the return to Canada and the absence of her immediate family. She has arranged housing through the College residence. She finds the classroom quiet and conducive to learning, but at home her roommate can be a distraction.

Shital finds math a challenge, but she is feeling very positive about her experiences with math in the program. She has a few friends and is enjoying her increased independence. Shital is very excited about moving forward with her goals. Her teacher says "Shital began the program doubting her ability in math and has quickly found a new level of confidence regarding the subject."

Fanshawe - Carrie

Carrie is a 28 year old single mother who worked as a building superintendent with her husband after leaving school. She has recently gone through a very difficult separation and is fighting for sole custody of her 2 year old daughter.

Her daughter was her motivation for returning to school. She wanted to be able to provide for her and not have to rely on others - especially her ex-husband. She had always wanted to work towards a better job. She enjoys fashion and working out. Her ultimate goal is a career in the recreational industry possibly as a personal trainer.

Because Carrie was diagnosed with a general learning disability, she was attracted to a college upgrading program because of the support and resources available to help her deal with her learning disability. She was also attracted by the "go at your own pace" learning environment. She anticipates math will be the most difficult subject. She is starting at LBS 3 math and communications and will need to complete OBS IV in both areas. She is very nervous about testing and says, "I always feel that I'm going to fail it."

Her family is very supportive about her return to school and praise her for doing well and offer lots of encouragement. Carrie lives in the country and does not have access to bus services so her family is providing transportation. Because her return to school means she can't work full time, she has been forced to go on Ontario Works and is adjusting to a significant decrease in her level of income. Realizing that transportation and day care were her major barriers she took care of them

before starting the program. Her daughter is in day care so she can attend school and do homework after class. But she finds it impossible to get work done at home. Her daughter needs her and once she is in bed she is just too tired to do homework.



Before she started she was concerned about finishing what she started, but now she feels "happy"; she feels she can do it; she is confident and motivated. She has made "tons" of new friends. "I feel great, the support from friends, family and teachers has been great."

Her teachers are equally positive, "Carrie has overcome some major personal trauma; she really has her life together now and is taking a huge step towards a better life for herself and her daughter. Carrie has come a long way in a short period of time; she is very determined to succeed, and I have every confidence that she will."

Northern -Shawn Joly

After working in construction for five years at minimum wage, Shawn decided to return to school to get tradesman papers, a diploma or credentials for a better job. He briefly tried credit programming two years ago but lasted only two months. Now 22 he is even more convinced that schooling will change his life. Twenty-two and single he is able to live at home and enroll fulltime in college programming.

During his first two weeks, Shawn concentrated on goal setting and self-directed learning strategies. Now in his academic programming, he is very focused on his goals, is prepared to work on his own and is pleased about the strategies he has acquired to learn and evaluate his own progress. The small group of nine that started together have bonded and provide support to each other when things get stressful.

Shawn's goal is to enroll in the Pre-Service Fire Fighter program in September 2003. He must complete OBS IV communications, biology and chemistry and LBS 5 mathematics. Shawn started at LBS 4 and knows that he will have to be very committed and make steady progress in order to complete his prerequisites in time. Shawn is most skeptical about the sciences. He left school without completing his Grade XI so he has no prior education in the sciences he needs.

Shawn's family is helping a great deal. Their support for his basic needs makes the situation easier. Shawn has devoted an entire section of the dining room table as a homework area. Shawn commutes to school with his cousin, a second year student. His girlfriend who is enrolled in a first year post secondary program is very happy about his return to school. They connect often during the day which is a good thing since there isn't as much time or money for dates.

Four weeks into his program, Shawn is still very motivated. A recent 90% on a numeracy test has boosted his confidence level. He is doing well in all his subjects and hasn't experienced any difficulties yet.

Shawn sums it all up. "I gave up a lot to come here, but already I see the gains that will definitely make a difference in my future."

Sheridan -Allen Kayes

Allen, out of school for 10 years, is a single father raising 3 daughters. The youngest - his miracle child, now 2 - was quite a surprise. The miracle - she was born 4 weeks premature at 3.5 pounds. The surprise - they didn't know her mother was expecting! Allen, a rebellious student, left school after grade X, moved to Huntsville and worked in construction and manufacturing around southern Ontario primarily as a fork lift operator on contract. Allen loves playing baseball and might coach a team for the girls.

Because Allen had briefly attended Durham College on a part-time basis several years ago, he was aware of college programming. He found the Sheridan program and approached OW for admission. Recently separated, he knew that he needed to improve his employment situation in order to provide for his girls: "At first I was a little intimidated about returning to school, but once I got here I realized that the sky is the limit. My little girls growing up was a big motivator to improve my life and theirs. I want to get into a post-secondary program at the college and then might even move on to a university program."

Allen's parents are well educated. His father has a business degree and MBA studies. His mother is a college graduate working for a law firm in Toronto as a legal assistant. They support him 100%. As part of his preparation to enter school, the family moved to a larger house, and his parents drive the children to day care.

Allen placed in LBS 3 math and 5 communications and will have to complete GBS IV to enter post secondary. He is stronger in math and more concerned about communications. He was anxious about his intake assessment and wishes he'd done more refreshing before the test. He especially likes being able to progress at his own rate. At home he finds it difficult to study until the girls are in bed, but each night Stephanie, Ashley and Michelle work quietly while Dad does homework. The first week was a challenge getting familiar with the program, but his rapid progress was very encouraging.

He feels that getting his life organized - especially day care - was the most important preparation for entering school. He has already made a lot of friends who call him to discuss assignments. He was afraid before he started that he couldn't do it. Now he is very encouraged by his initial success in the program, "I really want to improve life for my daughters. Nothing will stop me now!" His teachers agree, "Allen brings an exuberance to his studies that encourages others and will lead to his success."