

It's never too late

by
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I am the oldest student in my class, but that doesn't worry me. My name is Imah. I am in class for one reason – that's to finish what I started years ago but didn't finish - my education.

The opportunity has finally come! I've decided to make use of it. I am determined to see it through to the end. I heard about a literacy program in our neighbourhood from a friend; then I read about it in the Elmwood Herald. I talked it over with another friend and we both decided to go.

I am now attending the Elmwood GOAL Program. It's fun. I'm enjoying it. I'll encourage anyone who wants to attend these classes not to think twice – just go for it! It might seem difficult, but when you get there and meet with others, your feelings change.

I am from a small island in the Caribbean named Antigua. Antigua is 108 square miles and is know for its beautiful beaches and white sand.

I am from a family of eight – five girls and three boys. I'm the second oldest. I first went to a small private school when I was three and a half. I went until I was five. At five I entered elementary school. Our school went from first to seventh standard. I went to the sixth standard under great pressure because I had a lot of work to do at home. I missed many times so I got fed up and left.

I lived with my father and his wife. After some controversy in the family I went back to live with my mom. My mom worked in agriculture and I joined her. We picked cotton, weeded the fields, and packed the sugar canes for the train to take to the sugar factory.

I didn't like this situation so I left this rural location and went to live in the city where I could do different kinds of work. In my day, there weren't any second chances so I could not go back to school. I wanted to be a nurse but I didn't have the education to achieve my goal.

I left Antigua in 1968 on a vacation to the U.S. Virgin Islands. I got a job opportunity when I was there so I stayed for eight and a half years. I went to school there for a short time but because of working conditions I had to quit.

After this I came to Canada, but I wasn't legal so I moved to Boston for three years. I waited there until my daughter, who had come to Canada earlier and was now a Canadian citizen, sponsored me. I moved here permanently in 1979.

My first job was in a bakery. I worked the late night shift and babysat my grand kids during the day. I tried to attend Adult Ed. five nights a week before work, but again my attempt to finish my education was unsuccessful.

At exam time when I received my exam I placed it on my desk, rested my head on it, and fell asleep. The teacher woke me and questioned me. He said you're doing three full time jobs – no wonder you're so tired. I was so embarrassed that I never went back. But getting my General Education Diploma continued to be my desire. After I retired, I decided, I'm going to take another shot at it – so here I am!

I went back to school because I always felt cheated out of an education. I've tried twice to return but failed both times. Now I am free from the work force, my kids are grown, and the learning situation is available. I've decided to try again.

On my first day I was a bit nervous, but after I got to class I realized that I wasn't alone. Everyone was an adult like me and they were all very friendly. My first teacher's name was Karen. She was a doll and very patient. She found out what level I was at and then she started me from there. Reading wasn't my problem and I'm not too bad at math. My grammar needed a lot of help. Now, I have finished stage three and I hope to continue with the expectation of achieving a GED. My teacher at present is David. He too is very encouraging and helpful. I also have a very good volunteer tutor who is assisting me along the way.

I am inclined to read more since going back to school. I am also learning to speak and write properly. I'm feeling more confident in myself. There's nothing you can't do if you put your mind to it. For years the little I had learned lay dormant. Now it's beginning to wake up. Why? All because of going back to school.