

Inspiring stories from adult learners

The London Council of Adult Education has recognized the achievements of four University of Western Ontario students.

Linda Davis, Irena Olma, Jeff Johnson and Scott Pollock received an Adult Learner Award from the London Council for Adult Education on May 6.

Their inspiring stories below - partially in their own words and partially from those who have worked with them - offer a glimpse at the extent to which some students persevere to reach their education goals.

The London Council of Adult Education salutes those who have approached education as a lifelong pursuit.

LINDA DAVIS

Linda Davis returned to high school in 1982 at the age of 27 to complete her diploma. She then completed a three-year diploma at Fanshawe College. She started a degree at Western in 1989 with an evening course in Biology while working full-time at Fanshawe. Her studies soon came to a halt for a lack of funds.

In 1995, Linda was working every day of the week in two different jobs. Despite these demands, she completed a certificate in Business Administration at Fanshawe. She worked with adult students and provided mentoring from her own experiences

as an adult learner.

From 1998 to 2001, she took University of Waterloo courses and transferred credits to Western to resume studies.

"My inspiration for learning comes from my father who always had a keen interest in science and would talk with me about news items he had heard."

"Both my daughters received degrees from Western and, after achieving a three-year diploma from Fanshawe College, I was anxious to do the same.

"I took my first Western course in 1989 and I had hoped, at that time, to work towards a science degree but when I had trouble satisfying the math pre-requisite I became frustrated. Several years later a friend discussed the possibility of working towards a general BA which did not require math. I sought professional advice from counselling at UWU, and was pleased to have options laid out which were clear and attainable.

"One evening course I was lucky enough to take with my daughter who was in the Collaborative Nursing Program.

"I was in awe of my brilliant, fellow students who were always friendly and helpful. I have the greatest admiration for the faculty who guided and inspired me through this experience.

"With the completion of my final two courses in April, I will

have fulfilled my double minor degree requirements in Psychology and Anthropology.

IRENA OLMA

Irena Olma has always loved school. Born in Poland, her family was forced to move to Germany during the Second World War. After the war, Olma's family stayed in Germany so she could complete her high school diploma.

When she moved to Canada, she was uncertain how her high school studies would equate with the Canadian system, and she began to take high school here. She enjoyed the studies, and decided she would like to try university.

Olma took her first two Western courses as a part-time student in the early 1970s, and then after a gap of several years, returned in the early 1980s. Irena found it challenging to juggle full-time work and a family. When she planned a return to Western in 2004, she wondered if she could manage academic pursuits again 30 years after her first course.

Olma was wise to share her concerns with her professor who replied that she would teach her whatever she needed to know to be successful in the course.

Irena acknowledges the support from her family. Her husband drives her to and from class. Her two sons and daughters-in-

law, all teachers, have provided practical support from help with technology to assisting with essay writing.

In May, Irena will begin the final course for her bachelor's degree, realizing a 43-year-old dream.

"I was fortunate to have been given the exciting challenge of attending Western as a mature part-time student. With professors as mentors, colleagues and friends, great support from the Mature Student Advisor's office, and family standing by, I knew that I could complete a Bachelor's degree in Social Science."

JEFF JOHNSON

Jeff Johnson has been on a journey of lifelong learning for the past 20 years.

A love of learning has taken him on an interesting path that began with a Western BA. Since then, Johnson has also completed a three-year Legal Office Administration program, a three-year Ontario Management and Development program, and has taken many courses in management and leadership offered through his company.

In 2005, Johnson returned to Continuing Studies at Western and has since completed the Professional Certificate in Effective Leadership, and the Professional Certificate in Strategic Leadership.

Johnson has chosen courses that have allowed him to immediately apply his learning in the role of Sales Manager at Quixtar Canada Corporation. He believes one of the greatest benefits of the courses is the opportunity to learn from peers and share in best practices that can be put into use.

Jeff leads by example at work and advocates for the benefits of lifelong learning, encouraging co-workers to expand their learning activities.

SCOTT POLLOCK

Scott Pollock is a lifelong learner who studied part-time to complete his Masters in Education (Educational Studies).

Pollock is a mature adult learner who relies on book knowledge as well as experience.

An aspiring leader, he has also been accepted into a PhD program. His open-minded and reflective approach has been brought to bear on the commodification of knowledge in formal education institutions.

In addition, Pollock has contributed to educational literature by conducting research on teaching tendencies and preferences. The level of his work has been recognized by having prepared a paper that has been accepted for a peer-reviewed conference reader.