

Pursuit of lifelong education aim of 15 award recipients

The nominees were honored for their dedication, effort and determination.

By Kathy Rumleski
Free Press Reporter

When Allen Parsons came to Hutton House several years ago, he couldn't read or write.

Now, the London man is the recipient of an adult education award for his dedication, effort and determination in the pursuit of lifelong learning.

That's the criteria for the London Council for Adult Education award nominees, who come from 10 of its member agencies involved in adult education. This year's nominees will be honored tonight at a special ceremony at the central library.

"I think it's great," Parsons, who is learning disabled, said of his award. "I'll continue studying. I always hope to pick something up."

Kay Munro, co-ordinator of the adult basic education program at Hutton House, said Parsons fit the criteria perfectly. "He encourages others by his example to keep on learning. He hasn't lost interest. He is the essence of lifelong learning."

Parsons, who also works in

the contract area and mailroom at Hutton House — which is a workplace for about 60 adults with disabilities — receives one-on-one tutoring provided by volunteers. Between one-third and one-half of Hutton House workers participate in the adult basic education program, which includes basic numeracy, reading, spelling, story writing and computer use.

GREAT MOVE: Barb Bleck, another award winner who was nominated by the London board of education and studies at the Wheable Centre for Adult Education, said going back to school to get her high school diploma was a great move.

"I'm glad I came back. Now, I can sit down with my 11-year-old and do fractions," the mother of seven said.

She said having an education is important not only because it helps in finding employment, but because it increases a person's self-esteem and ability to communicate effectively. "If I'm not educated, I can't educate my children."

Larry Traxler, a co-operative, adult and continuing education consultant for the Middlesex County board of education, said many adults are upgrading so they can help their children.

"They should have an award

IF YOU GO

What: Sixth annual adult education awards, sponsored by the London Council for Adult Education.

When: Today, 3 to 5 p.m.

Where: Central library auditorium, 305 Queen's Ave.

as soon as they walk in the door," he said. "Many come in very pessimistic (about the future), then they realize, 'Yes, I can do this.'"

Traxler, who is also co-chairperson of the London Council for Adult Education, said numbers in adult education programs are steadily increasing. "There's a lot of downsizing of jobs and within jobs there's constant upgrading."

The council, which consists of representatives from 40 agencies and institutions in London and Middlesex with a special interest in encouraging adults to pursue further education, celebrated its 50th anniversary last year.

At its awards ceremony today, representatives from each nominating agency will review their nominee's history, touching on important milestones.

"(The award) recognizes the hard work and sacrifice these adults go through," Traxler said.