

EDUCATION

Single mom honored for beating the odds

A London woman, Marianne Dejong, right, gets top marks for working on her high school diploma by correspondence.



By Janet Sinnott
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While most people are relaxing and enjoying themselves after a day's work, Londoner Marianne Dejong is up most of the night studying.

"That's how determined I am to get my high school (diploma)," says the 35-year-old single mother, who's getting an education by correspondence while working as a pricer at a Goodwill store.

The hard work is paying off.

Dejong will receive an award of merit for achieving an 86 per cent mark in Grade 10 family studies despite a series of personal setbacks. During the last few years, she had a baby, her husband had heart trouble, and then her marriage fell apart.

Dejong and 12 others from across Southwestern Ontario who beat the odds will be honored at a ceremony tonight in London.

COURSES BY MAIL: Students taking correspondence courses from the Ontario education ministry answer questions and then mail their work to their teacher to be marked. The lesson is returned and the student continues with the next lesson.

In Toronto, the Independent Learning Centre co-ordinates the program. The centre began in 1926 to provide an education to children in rural areas who couldn't get to a school. Since the 1950s, most students have been adults although the centre still caters to some rural children.

"The mail makes it available to nearly everyone," says centre spokesman Graham Jones, adding that a telephone service is available for students who need extra help.

UPGRADE EDUCATION: Most students are adults who want to upgrade their education for other jobs, interest, or to get their high school diploma.

Dejong never made it to high school. Problems with the English language after coming to Canada from Holland as a child forced her to leave school in Grade 8.

Aside from her family studies course, Dejong has completed Grade 9 English, science, and math, Grade 10 math, and science and is enrolled in Grade 10 English. She hopes to work as a homemaker in a group home.

"My goal is to ... save some money, look for a decent place to live and get my son back," said Dejong, whose son is living with her parents in Guelph.