

Student Story: Norma's Way

Norma Cullins of Brownington is elated. This energetic mother of five, grandmother of seven, great-grandmother of four, has set a goal to accomplish her lifelong dream of earning a high school diploma. As Norma puts it, "I gave up my opportunity to finish high school to care for my younger siblings when my parents both had to return to work. That's what was done in those days."



Norma showing off an historic army uniform jacket she designed patterned and stitched together.

Norma, a former long haul truck driver, now has time to focus on herself. Tipped off by the friendly folks at the Vermont Department of Labor, Norma put in a call to Suzanne Pelletier of the Vermont Adult Diploma Program at the Northeast Kingdom Learning Center in Newport. Suzanne reminisces about Norma's February call. After a brief introduction, Norma said, "I want to get my high school diploma!" Norma came into the center excited to be off on her journey. After a few baseline assessments, Norma eagerly met Jack Stouffer, a NEKLS Math tutor. Jack and Norma worked diligently to help her retrieve her forgotten math skills. According to Jack, "Norma is easily the most self-taught student I have encountered. From sewing to truck driving to operating complex machine tools, she has learned and done everything. She even got actively involved in ridding an urban neighborhood she was living in at the time of criminals and gangs. Her stories could fill a book or two."

Norma enrolled in the Vermont Adult Diploma Program in March. She has completed two of the five required portfolio projects. "NEKLS has given me knowledge of writing that I have struggled with all my adult life," said Norma. She is excited and looking to graduate with a Lake Region Union High School diploma in January 2012. What's next for Norma? Never one to slow down, Norma has already enrolled in a summer class at CCV. In the fall, she plans to take Small Business Management so that she can continue to develop her Brownington-based sewing business, Norma's Way. Anyone who has met Norma knows that she will not rest until she has succeeded. Keep on truckin', Norma!