

Adult Education Connection
By Karen Gent



Imagine a mother and son proudly walking together in their graduation caps and gowns. That could be a picture of Jennifer and Garry Lee Deskins at their GED graduation ceremony on June 5, 2007.

Jennifer Deskins of Honaker, Virginia didn't complete high school and had been out of school for many years when she began attending the Even Start Program at Honaker Elementary School with one of her sons in 2002. Jennifer says that it was Sherry Dowdy, a kindergarten teacher at the school, who escorted her to the class and encouraged her to get her GED.

Jennifer had often thought about earning her GED over the years, but she didn't believe she would be able to do it. Much to her surprise, Jennifer quickly passed three of the GED tests- everything but science and math. In spite of her rapid success, Jennifer became discouraged and dropped out of the class.

In the meantime, Jennifer's son Garry Lee had been struggling with school. In 2007, Garry was a seventeen-year-old senior and readily admits that he was a rebellious teenager who didn't like school, stayed in trouble, and was court-ordered to earn his GED. Garry was enrolled in the ISAEP (Individual Student Alternative Education Plan) Program in which high school students can earn their GEDs. Garry's mother, Jennifer, was in total agreement with the judge's decision and encouraged Garry to complete the program.

Garry says that he had always felt incapable in school until he entered the ISAEP Program. In his first two days of class attendance, he surprised himself by passing the Official GED Practice Tests. Immediately after that, he took the official GED Tests and passed the complete battery! Garry says that this success made him realize that he had learned more in school than he had thought. Garry's attitude was beginning to change.

As soon as Garry passed the tests, he began to try to convince his mother to do the same thing. As a result of Garry's urging, Jennifer decided to register to take the science and math tests. She amazed herself by passing both tests and earning her GED! Both mother and son accomplished goals they had believed were beyond their reach.

When asked how he has benefited from earning his GED, Garry states that he now has much higher self-esteem. He emphasizes that he found the atmosphere of his class to be encouraging and found out that he was very capable of doing the work. He says that before earning his GED, he was always trying to hurt people, but now he wants to help people. Garry is currently job searching, is active in his church, and hopes to attend SVCC and study to be a diesel mechanic.

Jennifer says that she is very proud of what her and her son have accomplished. She expresses that she feels better about herself and has learned that she can achieve the objectives set before her. Jennifer currently works at Walmart and David's Grocery and would like to pursue a career in healthcare.

For more information about free GED classes and GED testing, contact Southwest Regional Adult Education at 889-5424, or call toll-free at 1-866-581-9935.