

# Moving ahead, with help

## Former poor student earns Dollars for Scholars award

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PETERBOROUGH — High school was not a piece of cake for Diana Lavoie. But if she has her way she'll return there one day — as a chemistry teacher.

"I just had really bad grades," says the 17-year-old student, who graduated from ConVal High School on Saturday.

But she persevered.

"I haven't always been a straight A student. It's just this year I picked up," she says. In her senior years, she had "almost all A's."

Diana, 17, who lives on Wilton Road in Peterborough, plans to attend Plymouth State University this fall.

"It's local and I can afford it. I don't have a lot of money to spend, so it seemed like a good choice," she says.

Paying for college won't be easy, but Diana was aided this month when she was awarded a \$5,800 two-year scholarship as the 2008 recipient of the ConVal Community Scholarship Foundation's Dollars for Scholars award.

Founded in 2006, the scholarship foundation is a non-profit organization designed to provide students in the ConVal region who are facing personal or financial challenges with grant money and community support to help them achieve their potential.

"I was nominated by my guidance counselor," Diana says. "I had a really bad sophomore and junior year. And I don't really have a lot of money to go to college. But I'm still going. That's why she chose me."

Her difficulties in high school reflected hard times at home.

Her father, Michael Lavoie Sr., was diagnosed with cancer when Diana was in the second grade. At the time he was self-employed with his own auto body repair shop in New Ipswich. When Diana was 11 years old, her family, including her mother, Diane, and her two older siblings, Ashley and Michael Jr., moved from New Ipswich to Peterborough. Her mother works in patient relations at Dartmouth-Hitchcock in Nashua.

Because of his illness, her father closed his business. Although he is cancer free now, her father went on disability, Diana says, because he continues to battle the affects of chemotherapy as well as hereditary arthritis.

Paying for a college education is something Diana is doing on her own, through scholarships, grants and student loans.

At Plymouth, Diana plans to follow in the footsteps of her favorite teacher, Arthur Giovannangeli, and become a chemistry teacher. Giovan-

nangeli retired last year.

"He was the best," she says. "His personality and the way he taught. It was exciting. Never a dull moment."

In her application for the Dollars for Scholars award she wrote, "I want to be as good a teacher as Mr. Gio; he was by far the best teacher at Con-Val."

Although seniors saw their last day of school two weeks earlier, on Friday — the day before graduation — Diana was in the ConVal art room with junior Ashley Hall painting flowers on a prototype recycling bin, which was designed and built by students in Con-Val art and environmental science classes. The two classes partnered this year for a service-learning project, which Diana explains is "a cross between community service and learning stuff."

This spring the Peterborough Select Board agreed to let the students replace the trashcan outside of the Toadstool Bookshop this summer with the prototype recycling bin, as a test to see how successful recycling in downtown Peterborough will be.

Although Diana looked at home in the art room, with paint brush in hand, she says she is an environmental science student with little art experience.

"I've only taken ceramics here. So, it was kind of nice to combine science and art in one class. Because taking an art class by itself is a little scary to me."

If the prototype works well the students hope to replace all downtown trashcans with recycling bins.

"Tourism is big here so it's definitely good that we're going to try to put it downtown," she says. "Because we see a lot of garbage come in here and most of it can be recycled. Hopefully we'll get a good response this summer."

Despite her college plans Diana says she does not want to lose sight of what she has set out to accomplish with the project. She is hoping to come back and follow-up on it.

"I spent a lot of time on this and I hate to leave it."

Because of what she has learned through the service-learning project, Diana says, she will carry her work to promote recycling in college. She has already applied for membership in the Plymouth State student recycling group Common Ground.

"I learned that recycling is definitely something we need to do. I thought it was nice, you know, to put your plastic in the plastic bin. But I learned it is a really big deal," she says. "It needs to be more widespread. But this is a good start for us."

### Profile



DIANA LAVOIE