

Reaping what they sow

Two farmers received their GED after decades of being out of school

BY JASON GINTER
THE GUARDIAN

William Brander and Larry Sudbury, who are both in their 40s and working on a farm, wanted to take part in the P.E.I. Farm Technicians Apprenticeship program. But neither had graduated high school.

Enter Laurie Loane, the administrative co-ordinator for the P.E.I. Agriculture Sector Council.

"She had a bunch of pamphlets and fliers, and just told us what the course consisted of," said Brander.

The Farm Technicians Apprenticeship Program is a blue seal program. Among the requirements is a high school diploma or equivalent.

That meant Brander and Sudbury – and three other applicants – first had to get their high school diploma equivalent.



Brander



Sudbury

lencies.

Luckily, program participants are allowed to complete their GED or equivalent during the course of the program.

Brander and Sudbury completed the course for the GED, while two other applicants are enrolled in the course. One other person requires one last test.

Loane says she doesn't want people to shy away from the farm technician course because of this.

"I don't want people to be intimidated by not having their GED or high school diploma,"

Brander and Sudbury certainly weren't intimidated; in fact this was a benefit for them.

Sudbury said his GED wasn't a priority, but he did want to pursue it eventually.

"I feel better now. It gives me more options with work," he said.

Brander just had other priorities as well.

"I was interested, but I never had the time," he said.

Loane was part of the group that connected the farm technician program with the GED.

"We wanted to connect GED with farm technicians, to be the go-between," she said.

She was pleased with the outcome.

"It's very positive results." Loane said the initiative is there to help those who need it.

"If people put their minds to it, then we can help individuals succeed."

This includes those who dropped out of school.

"We need to tell the story of success, and how we helped them achieve their goals," she said.

Richard Brown, minister of workforce and advanced learning, congratulated the two men.

"Their hard work and dedication is a great example of how motivated Islanders can be in improving their employment prospects through additional education and training," he said.

"This one-of-a-kind program will support the P.E.I. agriculture industry in meeting their demands for highly skilled individuals. In addition, the GED certificate is a great benefit for individuals, of which I'm sure will help to open many doors for advanced training and future employment in the Island workforce."

Three additional farm technicians are currently working on obtaining their GED equivalent diplomas.