

Feature

'Over 21' group works hard

GED students set individual educational goals

by Carolyn Clinkingbeard

Reporting II Class

They laughingly call themselves the "over 21 group," but they are very serious about obtaining their GED, General Educational Development Certificate. Buster Dutton, 66, Janice McAllister, 46, Alice Lawson, 44 and Ha Thi Eaglin, 39, are students in Jim Meiser's GED Preparation class.

Each one had different circumstances which prevented the completion of high school, but now they all feel the need to complete their educational goals.

Buster Dutton left school after eighth grade graduation. "There was no junior high then," Dutton said. "My step-dad couldn't get a job, so I went to work picking up logs in Astoria two weeks before my graduation. I was working on graduation day, but I had completed my studies so they let me graduate."

Dutton has lived mostly in Oregon. "I worked all my life on the river...on tugboats, except when I was in the army," he said. He retired last August after working 20 years for Knappton Corp. After receiving his GED he plans to "tour the U.S. and Canada on my motorcycle, but not all at once," he said. Will his



Alice Lawson

wife go with go with him? "No, my wife is younger and she'll keep on working," Dutton said. "She'll help pay the bills."

Alice Lawson's problem is dyslexia. She is now receiving special help with her reading ability.

"I have the comprehension but when I read it comes out different," she said. She plans also to enroll in the displaced

homemaker class. "They teach you how to dress, to write a resume, and conduct an interview," Lawson said. "How to put your best foot forward."

Lawson is married, and doesn't have to work right now. "But if anything happens I want to be able to go out and look for a job," she explained.

Janice McAllister attended a California high school until she was a sophomore. "I was an avid reader but math was a problem," she said. She related that her teacher told her she was stupid. He said she should get married. "So I took his advice," McAllister said. "I left school and got married. Now, 30 years later, I'm back."

She and her husband used to own a restaurant, but when he died she had to sell it because she couldn't do the paper work. She will also take the displaced homemaker class. "It's to put you back in the world...to organize your marketable skills... to utilize things at your disposal," McAllister said.

"When I came to school here, it's like a teacher opened a door... like putting light in a tunnel"

Ha Thi Eaglin grew up in a village in Vietnam. She came here in 1973. She recalls her childhood as difficult years. She had seven brothers and sisters but said she felt like their mother. "The day after they were born they were mine," Eaglin said. "I fed them, diapered them....you name it...I did it." Her mother owned a small grocery store and spent all of her time there.

Ealin said when she was 14 she decided to get a job and pay someone to take care of the children. Soon she moved to the city, opened a wholesale grocery business, and returned home only once a month, to pay the bills. "I couldn't read or write but I could talk good and they, the customers, didn't know," Eaglin said. "I figured faster than they could on paper."



Ha Thi Eaglin



Janice McAllister

By the time she was 16 Eaglin could support the whole family and her mother quit working in the store. At 17 she bought them a house with eight bedrooms and four baths. She hired a chauffeur, a cook and a housekeeper. She also employed four in her business.

"It's not like here," Eaglin said. "Over there, if you're smart and have the energy, you can really make it. I wanted to open a restaurant here but there is too much red tape."

Eaglin has a low opinion of Vietnamese men. She said it's always the women who work in the fields. "The men go to war but they can't work hard like the women," she said. "All

they can do is make babies." She said it will take two more years, "but I'm not going to let that hold me back." She plans to go on to college. She hasn't yet decided on her major but said she is interested in counseling "because I like to help people."

She said most American children don't seem to appreciate their opportunity to learn.

"I never had a chance to go to school in my country," Eaglin said. "When I come to school here, it's like a teacher opened a door...like putting light in a tunnel. When I can write really well I'm going to write an article about this school."



Buster Dutton

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I can drive when I drink.

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