Abilis Program Manager Works Toward Degree

GREENWICH, Conn. — Sandra Askew, 41, does not consider herself to be a typical student. With three children and a full-time job, she needed a college program that offered her flexibility. So she was grateful to find IDEAL, the accelerated adult learning program at the University of Bridgeport’s Stamford Center, because it is ideal for her work and family schedule.

At the moment, Askew attends classes only one day a week. Some courses run for an eight-week schedule, others for five. But the Abilis program manager is steadily working toward a bachelor's degree in psychology.

“I am excited about being in the program,” she said. “At some point in my life, I would love to be a counselor and work with families.”

Askew had a number of credits from Norwalk Community College when family obligations took over. Now that her youngest is 18 months old, she is ready to participate in the classes necessary to complete her degree.

During the day, Askew works in Greenwich, splitting her time between two Abilis group homes. The homes provide residential and employment support for people with developmental disabilities from childhood through late adulthood.

“We integrate them into the community,” she said of her residents. “They are functional people. We give them quality of life.”

Once home in Norwalk, Askew switches hats, caring for her children, who range in age from 19 years to 18 months. It is that juggling that made her consider online courses before she stumbled upon the IDEAL program.

“I am more visual,” she said, explaining that she felt she needed a classroom setting but did not have the time to go to classes a few times a week. She said she was nervous about taking on a new program, but IDEAL has given her confidence in her ability to do it, one class at a time.