

UNDERDOGS TRIUMPH

GED recipients show special determination

Many of us in the hard-news business have a soft spot in our hearts for bootstrap-pulling underdogs. You know the type: folks who use their own grit and dedication to overcome adversity and reverse life's misfortunes. Whether those problems were self-inflicted or thrust upon them by fate really doesn't matter. All that counts is starting and finishing the road to victory.

So it was encouraging to see the story in Sunday's *Columbian* about people who had failed to obtain high school diplomas but refused to give up, kept studying, kept testing and earned their General Education Development certificates. There were plenty of tears of joy among 75 GED recipients and family members at Saturday's Clark College ceremony. A GED certificate is a prized possession. Like a high school diploma, it opens for the holder a whole new world of better jobs, increased earnings, paths to college degrees and higher self-esteem.

Each of these champions conquered a tough challenge, master-

ing five subject areas (language arts, social studies, science, language arts and a two-section math component).

The GED also is an effective antidote to one of our state's most heated controversies, the one regarding the Washington State Assessment of Student Learning. Earn your GED, and your WASL scores no longer matter.

At Clark College since Sept. 1, 2007, 1,032 people have tested for the GED and 643 have completed the requirements so far. Local testing has increased in recent years from about 900 annually to about 1,000. Educational Service District 112 also offers GED preparation classes.

Any high school nongraduate who is 19 or older is urged to (1) interpret that earlier academic shortfall as a reason to rally and (2) contact Clark College or ESD 112 about pursuing a GED.

Columbian reporter Isolde Raftery quoted one GED recipient at the Clark College ceremony, Ericka Chavez, 28: "Job-wise, there's absolutely nothing I could do without it."

With it, though, you go, girl.