



Progress Report

Vermont Adult Learning

Volume 1, Issue 2

Graduation Fever



Like every learning institution, Vermont Adult Learning celebrates

graduation with a ceremony and its own traditions. You may picture graduation as a group of young men and women striding across the school stage one last time with the door of opportunity wide open as they exit, stage left.

Well, our graduation ceremony includes caps and gowns, speeches, tears and laughter, the symbolic turning of the tassel, and the same open door to opportunity. On June 6th, we cele-

brated 85 graduations of Franklin and Grand Isle residents who earned a high school credential through the High School Completion Program, the Adult Diploma Program, or the GED. Their ages ranged from 16 to 68, and their paths to this rite of passage were incredibly diverse.

A diploma these days is more valuable than it ever was. We see many folks needing to earn one as a condition of continuing employment, as well as those who are looking to earn it in a non-traditional manner, and those who simply decided "it's time" to go back and fill in that gap in their accomplishments.

At VAL, we provide services that lead to a high school credential, that support work readiness employment retention, and that springboard into college courses. Every day, we measure our accomplishments in ways that reflect the needs of adult students, from those getting back on their feet after a period of unimaginable hardship, to those choosing to provide their kids with a role model to be proud of. And yes, once a year, we get dressed up in bright frocks and funny hats, and celebrate with a graduation ceremony.

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Heading for Success On a Path Less Traveled



On Friday, June 6, a graduation ceremony for fourteen students was held at Vermont Adult Learning/Learning Works. These students either achieved their GED certificates by studying for and passing the GED test, earned their high school diploma through Vermont's unique Adult Diploma Program, or earned enough credits to graduate through the new High School Completion Program.

Front Row to back: Chris Gravelin, Debbie Bechard, Jamie Bushey, Brandy Russin, Braden Aldrich, Brenda Ploof, Gordon Sawyer, Travis Stetson, Diane Morry, Josh Sullivan, Caitlin Fosgate.

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"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world"
-Nelson Mandela

Heading for Success On a Path Less Traveled, Continued from pg 1

The keynote speaker was Louise Mastin, who has worked in VT's adult literacy system for 29 years, and has seen our organization through almost constant evolution. She spoke to graduates about three wonderfully inspirational ideas: "Be the change you want to see in the world; Pay it forward; and you can't control the wind, but you can adjust your sails".

Also sharing his wisdom with the graduates was Roger Sweet (shown at right), a former student who is now Vermont's representative in the national adult literacy organization VALUE. A tireless supporter of all our students, he knows from experience how difficult it can be to return to education as an adult many years after leaving regular school.

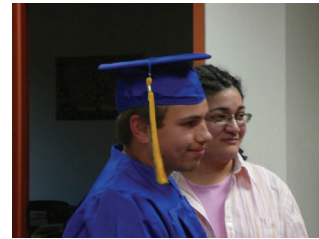


He also spoke about the challenges young students who have recently dropped out of high school face as they take on the responsibilities of setting their own goals and schedules for achieving success. Our very diverse class of students has at least one thing in common: they don't give up, no matter what obstacles they are facing.

Friends and family members cheered as the graduates switched their tassels from the right side of their caps to the left, the side our hearts are on, symbolizing the transformation into a new phase of life. It was a joyful, inspiring, and celebratory evening for everyone who was present. We congratulate all our graduates, including the many who were not able to attend the ceremony, and wish them all the very best as they head into the next phase of their lives.



Chris Gravelin



ADP Assessor Doris Almodovar with Josh Sullivan.

Vermont Adult Learning's regional center is located at 5 Lemnah Drive in St. Albans. VAL, a member of Learning Works, the statewide non-profit adult literacy system, serves students age 16 and older with an array of educational services including assessment and advising, GED preparation, high school diploma programs, workplace skills, preparation for entering college, life skills classes, ESL classes, family literacy, computer skills and basic literacy.

Meet Dawna Czuchrey



My name is Dawna Czuchrey. I have been with Vermont Adult Learning for almost a year now.

When I was hired in August 2007, I was hired primarily to do one on one tutoring. I felt this was a good match for me having had experience tutoring while a student at Johnson State College.

When I started tutoring, I was tutoring mostly math classes, then, as the need arose, I started tutoring other subjects as well.

When I started college, my plan was to major in Psychology. I wanted to eventually enter into a Forensic Psychology masters program.

I did major in Psychology and two years into school I started studying Political Science and Accounting. In 2001 I graduated with two Bachelors degrees; one in Psychology and one in Political Science. I also completed a certificate in Accounting.

Having gone to college several years after graduating high school and being a single parent, I empathize with many of our students here who have been out of school for a long period of time.

I know from experience it can be difficult at times to balance home, work and school obligations. I speak from experience when I say it is worth sticking it out. When I graduated, I was working 30 hours a week, raising my stepson, two foster children and I was pregnant.

There were times when I wanted to quit my studies, and am thankful I didn't.

For the past year I have enjoyed working in the open center, tutoring one on one's and working at our satellite sites in Richford and Enosburg.

Vermont Adult Learning held its annual Fundraiser.

The Student Advisory Board of Vermont Adult Learning planned and put on a very successful Rummage Sale to raise money for student support services. It was held at our site at 5 Lemnah Drive in St. Albans on Saturday, May 24th. They raised almost \$350 during the four hour sale, and facilitated the recycling of lots of excellent clothes, household items, plants, books and toys. The members of the Board did a truly awesome job of teaming up to present an event that was well coordinated and organized.

VAL's Student Advisory Board is a group of past and present students committed to promoting the importance of literacy and supporting students who are struggling to balance work, family responsibilities and study. The Board has been meeting every other Monday from noon to 1 pm, and welcomes anyone who is interested in attending. Proceeds from this fundraiser have been used in the past for GED test scholarships, sending students to educational conferences and leadership trainings, and other student support services.

Many thanks to the local businesses that supported our student advisory board by donating food, products, gift cards and money for our fundraiser.

Did you know:

My Trip to St. Louis



Roger Sweet

I was nominated to be on the Board of Directors for VALUE. VALUE is a national organization totally run by adult learners. They are working to improve our nation's educational system and empower adults with low literacy skills to realize their full potential. They

want to see reform in adult literacy policy. I was invited to attend the VALUE national leadership conference in St. Louis in April.

When I arrived I was met by Monica Baxley, Faye Combs, the new president of the Board of VALUE, and Marty Finsterbush, director of VALUE.

We met the next day with another literacy group, Pro Literacy, which is bigger and has more money. We are planning the best way for our two organizations to come together and support one another. Then we had the VALUE Board meeting and I was elected as the newest member of the Board of Directors. Any support I can get, I will appreciate as I will be learning and striving to do the best I can.

The VALUE organization decided to change its logo and some of the words in its name. It is now known as Voice of Adult Learners United to Educate. Membership dues are \$20 a year. There are different levels of support. They also have a very nice new website (valueusa.org) which will soon be equipped with a talking function, thanks to Angela Corbin, who will be the voice for the words.

Oh what a weekend that was for me.

After I got elected, within a few hours I was asking for a special meeting because there was quite a lot of friction on the VALUE Board itself. There were some misunderstandings. During the meeting I found there were more problems than I knew about, and everything got aired out and people communicated with each other. They all seemed to appreciate that I noticed the friction and brought it to everyone's attention. I believe in telling the truth as I see it and communicating honestly with people.

As a Board member I have to participate in conference calls once a month and serve on a committee. Except for me, there are all women on the Board. I will have to work hard to make my voice heard and get everyone to listen.

It was a great trip and a great experience. I have learned a lot and I'm looking forward to sharing it with Vermont, New Hampshire, and possibly upper New York and Maine. I am looking forward to getting the word out about VALUE and their new website.

Northwest Technical Center



It has been said that "knowledge, and the ability to put it to good use, is not the only dependable source of wealth all over the world.

Those who succeed in today's economy, and that of the future, will do so because they made the most of the human desire and capacity for lifelong learning. Students at Vermont Adult Learning in St. Albans display these qualities.

I have been privileged to be a presenter to many groups engaged in Adult Basic Education. Through these presentations, I have met many wonderful individuals who are in the process of changing their lives for the better and seeking their own path to becoming educated, skilled, lifelong learners who lead by example.

Every year, I refer students to programs at Vermont Adult Learning. Some are seeking high school diplomas, some to improve basic skills, some to enhance employability. Whatever the reason, Vermont Adult Learning works in St. Albans provides opportunities for people to achieve their highest potential.

Marilyn Savoy

Adult Services Coordinator,
Northwest Technical Center

Executive Director, Franklin Grand Isle
Workforce Investment Board

Vermont Adult Learning

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We're on the Web
www.vtadultlearning.org

Our mission is.....

To provide adults with essential skills education to further their educational, employment and personal goals in order to expand their options and capabilities in the family, community and workplace.

Who We Are...

Paul Dickin

F/GI Regional Manager

Paul has been with VAL for 2 years.



Jaime Maskell

Office Manager

Jaime has been with VAL for 4 years.



Dawna Czuchrey

Work Readiness Coordinator

Dawna has been with VAL for 1 year.



Cindy Samuelson

Educational Advisor

Cindy has been with VAL for 6 years.



Kristy Hancox

High School

Completion Liaison
Kristy has been with VAL for 1 1/2 years.



Dawn Manchester

High School

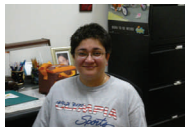
Completion Liaison
Dawn has been with VAL for 7 years.



Doris Almodovar

ADP Assessor & GED

Chief Administrator
Doris has been with VAL for 3 Years.



Chad Duprey

Educational Advisor

Chad has been with VAL for 1 year.



Nicole Baslow

Work Readiness Coordinator

Nikki has been with VAL for 3 years.



Carolyn Bronz

Teacher

Carolyn has been with VAL for 13 years.



Lori Niederer

Teacher

Lori has been with VAL for 3 years.



Alice Drislane

Teacher

Alice has been with VAL for 1 year.

