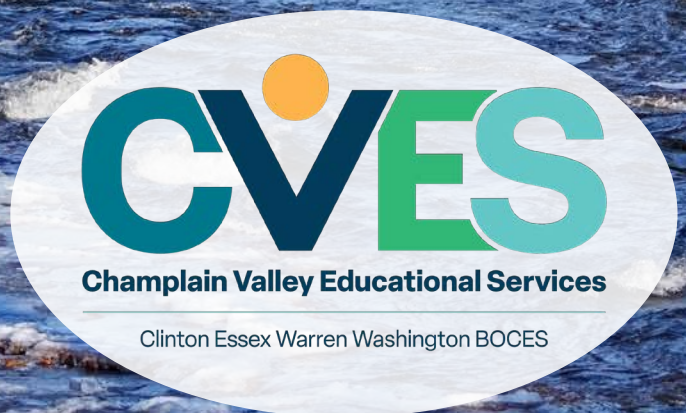


CHAMPLAIN VALLEY EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

# *SUCCESS STORIES*

ISSUE: XV - 2022-2023





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Clinton Essex Warren Washington BOCES

## OUR MISSION

Champlain Valley Educational Services empowers students, schools and communities by providing exemplary education, training, support and shared services.

## OUR VISION

We aspire to be a nationally recognized, premier provider of dynamic and innovative programs and services, serving as a catalyst for personal and regional economic growth.

## OUR CORE BELIEFS

- Students are our first priority.
- We value open and honest communication.
- We embrace collaboration and shared decision-making.
- We promote creativity and innovation.
- All students can learn and be successful.
- We all lead by example.
- We act with integrity, fostering respect for all.
- Students, family and community are valued partners for success.
- We ensure a safe, supportive learning and work environment.
- We all impact the educational process and are dedicated to perform at the highest possible levels.

### **Public Non-Discrimination Notice:**

Clinton-Essex-Warren-Washington BOCES a/k/a/ Champlain Valley Educational Services does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age or any other legally protected status in its programs, activities, employment and admissions; and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. Inquiries regarding this nondiscrimination policy may be directed to:

**Matthew Walentuk** – Civil Rights Compliance Officer  
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Dear Colleagues and Friends,

We are thrilled to share with you the latest edition of CVES' Success Stories. In alignment with our goals, CVES has grown and expanded across divisions to ensure the best experiences for students, employees and districts.



CV-TEC's programs and students have continued to thrive and excel. Student enrollment has been at a record high, leading to increased program involvement. Also, the New York Association for Continuing and Community Education awarded a student in the CV-TEC and HSE program Student of the Year Award.

Our Rise Center for Success has been implementing great projects for students. Students can continue their education after graduating in the Duken classroom. This was thanks to CVES' strong partnership with Plattsburgh City School District. In Mineville, students from 9-12th grade visited a college campus. It was an amazing trip to show students different options after high school.

Management Services expanded its responsibilities and support for districts and CVES. During the pandemic, the Interscholastic Athletics department helped schools play safely. This support continued by centralizing the payments of officials through CVES. There was also the creation of the HRA/FSA Co-Ser. The new co-ser helps with the CVES Benefits Services.

The School Support Services Division continues to work closely with those in CVES and our component districts for great experiences. The new CVES Conference Center is equipped with state-of-the-art technology for remote and in-person participants, and serves as a multifunctional space for all types of events. There has also been funding from the American Rescue Plan Act, which helped school libraries buy eBooks and audio books to fit the NYSED CRSE framework.

In closing, I want to thank all of our students, families and component districts for your continued support. This incredible year of accomplishments and growth wouldn't have been possible without the dedication of our staff and the great partnerships we have in the North Country.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mark C. Davey, Ed.D.".

Dr. Mark C. Davey  
District Superintendent/CEO

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# CV-TEC Sets New Enrollment Record

## CV-TEC Division

Each and every day, students walk through the doors of CV-TEC and have endless opportunities presented to them.

This year, more students than ever are walking through those doors and finding their ways into classrooms and various real-world job sites to make the most of every second.

Enrollment numbers across CV-TEC's Plattsburgh, Mineville and Satellite campuses have reached a new high with a grand total of 838 students in various programs for the 2022-2023 school year.

"It's so exciting our students are happy to be here with us," Director of Career and Technical Education Michele Friedman said. "They are eager to learn.

They understand the gift they have been given by their home districts to participate in CTE, and it inspires us to be better and do better."

### EXPONENTIAL GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY

The perception of CTE has changed exponentially over the past 10 years and become a true resource that



employers look to and students can take advantage of.

"Our students can come to our programs and really make it work for them," Natural Resource Management teacher Chris Huchro said. "They have the chance to go right into the workforce or opt to go to college and pursue different career options after that."

Huchro and Taylor Sprague lead the way for the Natural Resource Management program at the Mineville Campus. Four years ago, there were just 15 students in the program, but that number skyrocketed to 52.

The increased enrollment resulted in Sprague being added as a second teacher this year, and she's enjoying the time with her students.

"When I was in school, I did not even know these programs existed," Sprague said. "Now that I am here, I see a completely different side of education and our students having a lot of success. When they are operating equipment, it's amazing to see the skill they have. You can see they are ready to get out there and work and join the workforce."

### CHANGE IN PERCEPTION

Programs such as Digital Production & Multimedia Communications, Culinary Arts



**ENROLLMENT: Continued on Page 5**



**ENROLLMENT: Continued from Page 4**

Management, Cosmetology and Allied Health lead the charge at the Plattsburgh Campus with more than 50 students apiece in each.

"We have spent many years trying to change the mindset of what CTE is and how it has evolved into another pathway to what's next for our students whether it's college or the workplace," Friedman said. "Since the pandemic, we are finding that there has been quite the focus on the essential jobs that CTE prepares students for."

And what's seemed to be a building trend and renewed focus lately is the independent nature students develop for themselves through their CV-TEC education.

"These kids are hardworking, they know what they have to do, and they work for it," Huchro said. "As teachers, we foster an environment that allows them to work, and we are doing a great job at that. I take a lot of pride in seeing our students succeed."

### **A STRONG CONNECTION**

Even as CV-TEC continues to grow and welcome more students, the working relationship they have with their teachers remain as strong as ever.

"We know these kids, and they are not just another face in the classroom," Sprague said. "That's what's cool about this Mineville community, and it's the same way for the

Plattsburgh Campus. Just because we are growing does not mean we are losing touch with students."

This is all made possible by CV-TEC leadership creating waitlists and ensuring students receive the proper education without staff becoming overwhelmed.

"We are continuously making adjustments, but these are great adjustments we have to make," Friedman said. "We are poised and getting ready to onboard more students in the future and welcome new staff to our CV-TEC family. It's an exciting time to be part of CTE."



# CVES Benefits Team Adds Specialized HRA/FSA Support

## Management Services Division

Champlain Valley Educational Services prides itself on providing the highest quality service possible to all its stakeholders.

CVES identified a new opportunity for support and created a sub-Co-Ser of its CVES Benefit Services — Employee Benefit Plan Administration (Co-Ser 602.200).

Led by Benefits Director Vicki Demarse-Giroux, this new component of Benefits Services offers Flexible Spending Account (FSA) and Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA) administration. These programs are administered with school business office practices in mind. Reporting and billing structure works to accommodate schools while being member focused.

Setting up this service typically takes a year or longer, but CVES put normal circumstances aside once the need was identified in early 2022 and went into full operation as of July 1, 2022.

“That’s the beauty of being at a BOCES. If you can dream it, you can do it,” Assistant Superintendent of Management Services Eric Bell said.

“Districts had a need. They were not getting high-quality HRA/FSA from the pre-existing vendor, so to meet that need and overcome that challenge, CVES decided to develop its own cooperative service.”

### FULLY OPERATIONAL

The Employee Benefit Plan Administration offers convenience to its employers and employees with online claims submission, no-cost debit cards and mobile applications.

“We had been asked to consider this for many years,” Demarse-Giroux said. “Our districts were telling us for years that there was a need for a person who understood the way the schools worked and what our employees needed.”

Commitments from school districts began to trickle in during Spring 2022 before the service officially launched.

AuSable Valley, Beekmantown, Boquet Valley, Keene, Moriah, Northeastern Clinton, Northern Adirondack, Peru and Plattsburgh are currently enrolled. CVES employees are also supported.

“Some of the feedback we got from Keene recently was, ‘We were relatable, and we got it,’” Demarse-Giroux said. “When Keene Superintendent of Schools Dan Mayberry said that, it was what we had been waiting to hear. It was a great way for



us to put a measuring stick to our services, and we knew we were headed in the right direction.”

### HERE TO HELP

When a school district has a question, CVES Benefits Specialist Kaitlin Bouyea is on the other line providing immediate assistance HRA/FSA participants may need.

The CVES Benefit Service works with school districts to create FSA Plans that fit for their employees’ needs. These offerings include Basic FSA, Dependent Care FSA, HRA Administration, grace periods, runouts and carryover options for selected plans.

“We are always working to be better, and we have a really great team at CVES,” Bouyea said. “Our ability to help our school districts and our own employees is powerful. We can offer them the convenience of being able to call us whenever and the peace of mind of knowing we have no clients outside of school districts we are worrying about.”

As the support continues to expand, there are many options to learn about for those who are interested. No matter what an individual wants to sign up for, whether it’s setting up an FSA account for Tylenol or more complex needs such as braces or eyeglasses, opportunity awaits.

Creating this Co-Ser in a timely fashion was a success of its own, but now the real successes will come as individuals receive assistance and support from the CVES Benefits Team.

“This is all about educating people about the benefits that they have,” Demarse-Giroux said. “It really takes the lift off the school districts, and that’s what we are here for and will always be here for. We always provide support and incredible customer service.”



# Mineville Students Visit North Country Community College

## Rise Center for Success Division

Students in the special education program gazed at the expansive campus of North Country Community College. They explored the campus, moving from building to building. For most, it was their first time ever being on a college campus.

“The benefit of bringing the students on a college visit was opening the door to the possibilities for after graduation,” Mineville’s Principal Dr. Grace Stay said. “For most of these students, college wasn’t an idea on the table, but it’s an option they should be thinking about.”

### LEARNING MORE

The idea started when students expressed interest in going to college. The teachers started to look into making a visit happen. NCCC hosted a college fair, so students were exposed to many different options.

“They had schools from all over the state that had booths and handing out merch,” Teacher Jordan Wendling said. “Our kids ate that up. We had one student who collected about 20 pens.”

Some students didn’t know what they wanted to do. Wendling helped them grab pamphlets with the school’s majors, and they narrowed it down to their interests. He encouraged the students to ask the tables about the programs and college.

After the fair, the students were given a tour of the campus. They saw all the facilities and residence halls. The tour guide explained when they could utilize facilities like the gym, cafeteria or a room with a pool table. Teacher Jean Gonyo said they were “super excited” to learn about the other activities on campus besides classes. It was an immersive experience.

“We visited a couple classes that invited us in while they were teaching,” Gonyo said. “The kids got to see an X-ray, and they explained what was going on in the X-ray. The kids thought that was really neat.”

The trip served as an eye-opening opportunity for the

students — that they have the option of college after high school. So far, two students have applied to NCCC, and one was accepted.

Damian, a senior who attended the trip, wants to study either business or psychology after high school. He has to start the application process, but learned more about college life from the visit.

“After the fair, we visited different parts of campus, and the college felt really welcoming,” Damian said. “The housing and cafeteria areas were nice, and they had cool games like a pool table.”

### OPPORTUNITIES AHEAD

College visits can be eye-opening to the possibility of higher education, which was something that students didn’t know was an option. The benefit of actually touring the campus was seeing how walkable it is. They were able to actually walk and see the distance from the classrooms to the residence hall.

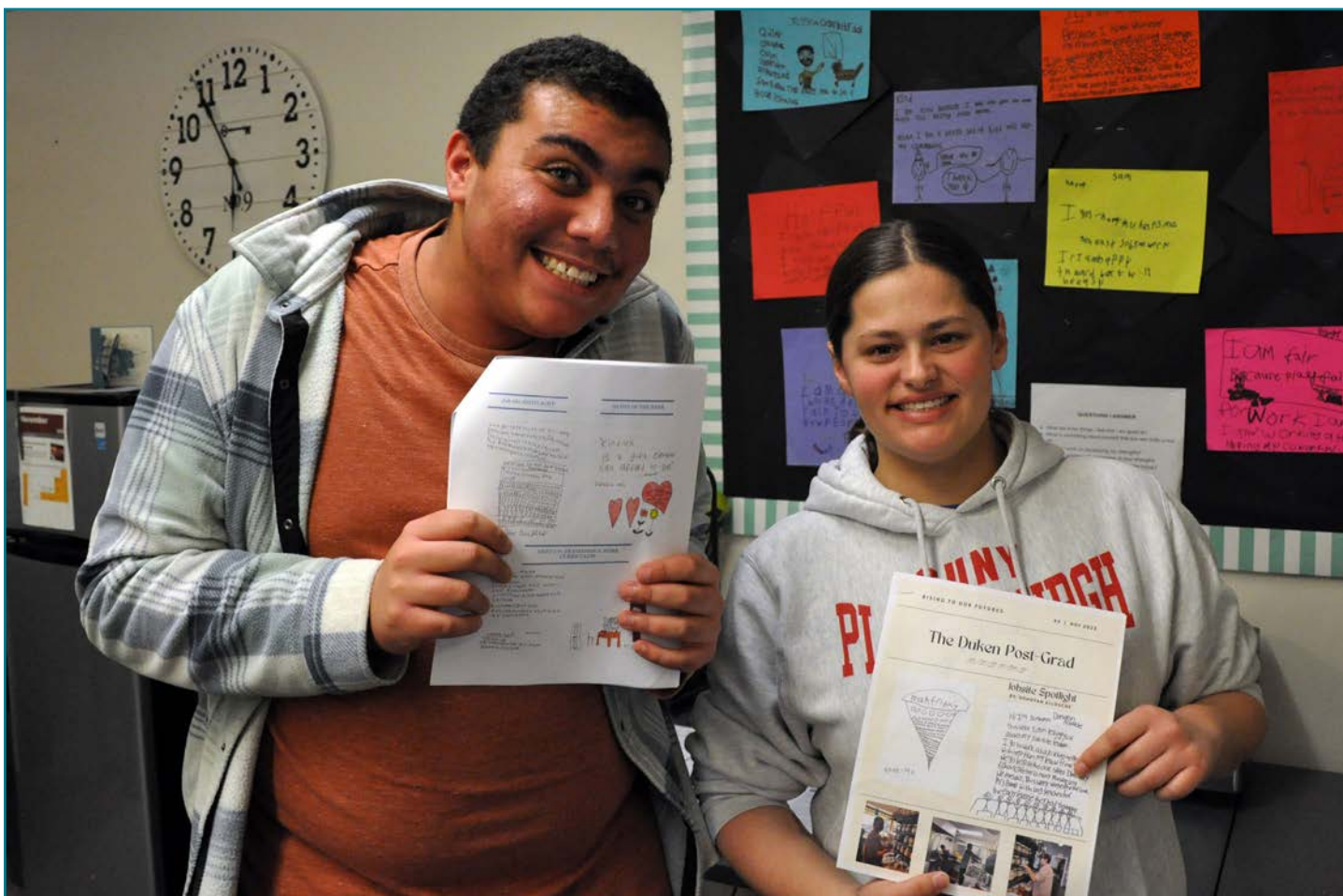
“They don’t think they have the ability or knowledge to go to college, and by

visiting and seeing what actually takes place, it gives them confidence to say, ‘I can do this,’” Gonyo said. “North Country, especially, has really small classes, and that’s what they are used to here. They had no idea that it existed, nor did the parents.”

Matt, a freshman who attended the trip, said he’s interested in attending college. He enjoyed walking into the classrooms and seeing the different buildings on campus. Matt and Damian said the campus was walkable, and there were plenty of spots to enjoy the outdoors.

The teachers and principal hope to continue broadening students’ horizons by bringing them on annual or bi-annual college trips. They want to open up the trip to different college campuses too. Beyond trips, the teachers want to offer college classes through NCCC in Mineville’s classrooms, so students will have credit before entering college.





# CVES Post-Grad Program Housed by Plattsburgh City School District

## Rise Center for Success Division

Once a storage room brimming with opportunity, The Duken classroom has been restored for post-graduate special education students. As a result of a strong partnership between The Rise Center for Success and the Plattsburgh City School District, a new program presents new opportunities for students across the region. It's also the first time in 10 years since a CVES special education program was housed in a component district building.

The program has 12 students enrolled from ages 18 to 21, and according to Coordinator of Transition Programs Tonya Robinson, the post-grad program is built around transition. Transition meaning preparing students for success in their next steps such as focusing on skills preparing them for employment and adulthood.

## EXPANDING SKILLS

The program is available for both full and half-day students. Half-day students may spend the other half of their day at their home district or participating in a CV-TEC program. For two half days of the week, students get work experience, then they work on the Next Step transition curriculum. Next Step starts with basics of the students' skills and what they excel at, and then it matches those skills to job placements. Students also explore each part of the employment process.

Also, as part of the program, students work on their social skills. Aly Restrepo, the special education teacher, has her students connecting with the community. The students' community involvement is based around a theme related to employment and community resources. Collaborative opportunities with the Partners in Transition Community Pre-Vocational program housed at SUNY Plattsburgh also provide social opportunities with peers in a different

**DUKEN: Continued on Page 9**



## DUKEN: Continued from Page 8

setting. These opportunities assist in expanding their understanding and transferable skills as they transition to adulthood.

### COMMUNITY CENTERED

"The benefit of being down here is we're close to downtown," Robinson said. "We're able to access public transportation easily. We're able to walk downtown and access all those businesses and resources that are available in the community."

The opening of The Duken Post-Grad classroom has expanded the opportunities for students to connect with the Plattsburgh community.

"A lot of my students go out to work in the elementary and middle school cafeterias," Restrepo said. "We're making connections with the Plattsburgh district just by being in this building."

Sam, a student in the automotive program, cleans equipment at the YMCA and details cars. He loves to pressure wash the car mats. When Sam isn't spending time at CV-TEC, he is learning more about his job and skills he needs in the classroom with the goal of finding a job in the automotive industry.

"It's a wonderful program. It's very, very appropriate for what Sam actually needs," Sam's mom, Debbie, said. "It's giving him job experience, and he's made a lot of new friends. He's done really well with the new teaching staff that he's come into contact with this year. So coupled with his tech program, he is just loving every bit of his day."

### WORKING TOGETHER

The students are also expanding their creativity within the classroom. Students collaborated on weekly newsletters that highlighted local job site features, jokes, Word of the Week, photos and art.

"All of the students here have worked on the newsletters," Angeline, a student, explained. "One student can do the quote of the week and the other can get pictures of their job site. Some do different things."

Director of Special Education Matt Slattery noted that this is the first step to continue growing the programming for students with disabilities to have opportunities and access to nondisabled peers.

"We want to make sure that our students are equipped for the future," Slattery said. "This is a great way to expand the regional continuum of services, and we thank the Plattsburgh City School District for partnering with us to host this program. With their support, we are able to provide this crucial education service that helps prepare students for becoming successful members of our community as adults."



# CVES streamlines officials' payments for all Section VII school districts

## Management Services Division/School Support Services Division

After working at a Section VII sporting event, interscholastic athletics officials used to fill out a payment voucher and hand it to the home team's coach or athletic director. Sometimes it was filled out quickly, but other times there were delays before it returned to the business office for processing.

There were some officials getting paid quickly and efficiently, while others were waiting for their paycheck. There were many different moving parts, and extra work for busy people.

To support school districts and officials, CVES started handling all payments of officials as of Fall 2022. This new plan takes away the extra workload from schools and their business offices and allows CVES to provide additional support to nearly 300 officials.

"Officials don't have to chase down payments if they work multiple sports," Interscholastic Athletics Administrator and Section VII Executive Director Matt Walentuk said. "Some officials officiate three sports a year, and that's a lot of work trying to do taxes. So now, they have a single, uniform organization to work with instead of each school."

### HELPING OFFICIALS AND SCHOOLS

There are currently 296 officials working for Section VII, and Interscholastic Athletics Coordinator Randy Lozier anticipates that number will increase with the help of Sections II and X. With the number of officials in the system, CVES is projecting handling approximately 6,500 payments each school year.

"Schools are finding that they can use their resources better to help the student-athletes in letting us handle all the nuances," Lozier said. He assigns officials to all Section VII home contests, checks to make sure officials attend the games assigned to them, and all payments to officials are provided.

This additional support given by CVES has been received well by school districts' athletics departments, business office personnel and superintendents. According to CVES Clerk Jessica Lagree, the biggest issues of streamlining payments was ensuring everyone's paperwork was completed. Now, with the new system officials are getting paid about every two weeks.

"One of the challenging things that all 26 districts in Section VII had was the time and effort it took to pay officials," Assistant Superintendent of Management Services Eric Bell



said. "From a district side, it was a heavy lift in terms of time, effort and coordination from athletic directors to the business offices to get the officials all paid. On the officials' side of it, there were a lot of complaints about how long it took for them to get paid. Now there is one central point of contact instead of 26."

### NEW SYSTEM

Also, as a part of increased productivity, the capabilities of a digital system, called RSchool, is being maximized. This way officials can view digital vouchers and forms,

assignments and paychecks through one system. It took away the need for shuffling papers and excess processing times. The digital system is also available for athletic directors to view and keep them informed of officials' schedules and contact information. This central system keeps everyone in Section VII athletics on the same page.

"Instead of hundreds of people working on this from athletic directors to business officials to claims auditors across all districts, we are now down to a handful of people," Bell said. "We have consistency in terms of payment and a point person people can call if they have questions or concerns."

### FRESH OUTLOOK

Central assigning supports the needs of multiple parties. Officials no longer have to worry about figuring out which school and person to contact. If an issue arises for game changes, payments, assignments, or really any concerns related to Section VII officiating, then it all is directed to the interscholastic athletics coordination office at CVES.

"This is a brand-new service for us," Walentuk said. "As we evolve this system, it will become even more streamlined and quicker to pay the officials and to bill the schools. It's only going to get better from here."

As the service grows and evolves, Lozier recognized that there's "always going to be small, little obstacles in the way." However, the overall feedback from athletic directors, business offices and schools has been "extremely positive."

"This process wouldn't work without Jessica Lagree, the support of Amy Campbell, Eric Bell, Matt Walentuk and Christine Myers," Lozier said. "Without all those people, we couldn't make it work."





# A Room Full of Opportunity

## School Support Services Division

A spacious room with state-of-the-art media features can host a variety of events. The new CVES Conference Center was built for adaptability.

The room can be flexible for any group size. There are four dividers for the option of smaller meetings. But take away the dividers, the room can seat about 350 people, theater-style, or 175 people with tables.

### A HOME FOR EVENTS

The space is capable of serving various needs for workshops, events and meetings. During district negotiations, the room was divided into three separate rooms. Teams were able to speak privately in separate rooms, but then they were able to come together and discuss in the center room.

"I love how functional the room is," Administrator for Instructional Services Michelle Lawrence said. "The rooms are so functional because they are so module. We can change them however we want to depending on the size of the event."

Another major success was Pathways to Leadership, which came through a multi-part series, using the Conference Center. The program, supported by component school districts, identified current education professionals who could advance their leadership roles by seeing future instructional or educational administration leadership opportunities.

The Center was used for meetings for ELA standards, the spelling bee, model schools and principals. There have also been National Technology Honor Society and High School Equivalency ceremonies held in the Center.

### BRINGING EVERYONE TOGETHER

Opening Day was held in the Center this past September, which welcomed every employee from CVES. Prior to the Conference Center, CVES had to rent spaces within the community that were large enough. Assistant Superintendent of

Educational Services Amy Campbell described the atmosphere as "amazing," with everyone fitting at an in-house location.

The Center is also equipped with the space for catering, accommodating furniture and cutting-edge technology capabilities.

The Conference Center welcomes in-person, hybrid and virtual sessions. Big screens make it easily visible for people in the room, and the camera has the ability to zoom in and pick up audio crisply. This gives virtual attendees the feeling to being present.

"The Center seamlessly incorporates virtual guests into meetings," Campbell said. "The room acts as a participant. It tracks speakers so virtual guests can see and hear clearly. The audio also makes virtual guests sound as though they are sitting there with you."

The tables and chairs are on wheels, so they can easily be moved around. There are power outlets and towers throughout the whole room, so everyone can bring their own devices.

"We are starting to generate a lot more interest in using the conference rooms," Lawrence said. "We're starting to get a lot more workshops here, too."

### CONTINUOUS SUPPORT

From July through December, the Conference Center has hosted 140 sessions and welcomed over 2,700 participants. With the regular use, a smooth system has been integrated when renting out the space. The Center can host full day and evening events.

"Our Conference Center is able to play host to countless educators of our region," Campbell said. "The room is versatile and capable of hosting a variety of events. This new component of our facilities is one we are proud of and certainly a fantastic way CVES can provide support to education in the North Country."

# Student of the Year

## McArthur's Motivation to Obtain GED Leaves Others Inspired

### CV-TEC Division

The stories of every student connected to Champlain Valley Educational Services hold very special meaning.

Melissa McArthur's story is one that leaves quite the impression.

This past October, McArthur was nominated and eventually won Student of the Year honors from the New York Association for Continuing and Community Education (NYACCE).

Her journey to this incredible honor is remarkable and something that will be a wonderful memory and moment forever.

The award recognizes adult students who have overcome adversity to further their education. Their achievements are recognized at an annual awards dinner in Albany.

"When I found out I won this award, I was kind of speechless," McArthur said. "For the people who know my story, I was at the lowest of lows. When I say low, I mean at the most bottom you can be. But I wanted to change and being back in school has helped greatly."



### HER STORY

McArthur is an incredible example of an individual taking part in many services that CVES offers.

While she was incarcerated in the Clinton County Jail, she began working to obtain her GED in late 2020 through CV-TEC's Correction Education Program.

In 2021, she was released from prison and decided to continue working toward her GED through OneWorkSource (OWS). Leading up to the fall of 2022, McArthur also enrolled in CV-TEC's Cosmetology Program, which she started attending five days a week, while going to OWS Tuesday through Thursday.

A day in the life of McArthur on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday saw her get dropped off at CV-TEC for the morning session, then catch a bus at 11:30 a.m. to head to the Plattsburgh Government Center where she switched to a different bus that brought her to OWS for noon. Mondays and Fridays were a bit calmer with only Cosmetology to worry about.

"I love everything about school," McArthur said.

During the fall, McArthur had to take a week off to tend to some family matters.

"All I wanted to do was be back in the classrooms," she said. "I really appreciated the learning aspect of it all, but the structure was also really valuable to me. The schedule might sound like it was really hard, but I enjoyed the challenge."



**AWARD: Continued on Page 13**



**AWARD: Continued from Page 12****AN EASY CHOICE TO NOMINATE**

It's not every year that a student continuing their education at OWS is nominated for Student of the Year, but McArthur was an easy choice.

Adult Literacy Coordinator Katie LaBonte made the decision to nominate McArthur. She had McArthur come in to fill the submission questionnaire, which was an emotional experience.

McArthur dropped out of high school in 10th grade. She struggled with attendance and behavioral issues as a young student. She originally began going to OWS to complete her GED in 2012, but every time she came close to testing, she stopped because she was afraid to fail. This happened three times.

But fast forward to 2020, and McArthur jumped back on the saddle and began taking courses while she was incarcerated.

"It's so negative in there," McArthur said referencing her time in jail. "Taking classes was the only positive thing that was going on. It gets you out of the pod and has you doing something productive."

Her teacher Dalton Castine said he saw a drastic change in McArthur's commitment as she continued coming to class in jail.

"At first, you could see she was going through some really hard times," Castine said. "She stuck with it and became a leader in the classroom and within the jail for the inmates who were also in class. It's definitely rare to see that type of commitment in a jail setting."

Committed is a perfect way to describe McArthur.

All inmates working toward their GED are provided tablets to do their class work in their pods. McArthur was always on her tablet working even when not in class.

"We have those tablets in the pods. I can track how the inmates are using the tablets, and she was on it all the time," Corrections Education Coordinator Dana Poirier said. "We ended up utilizing Melissa as a mentor.

She helped students in class and the housing units. Her attendance was outstanding."

As time went on even after her release from jail, McArthur's motivation became more and more evident as she worked toward her GED.

"She has faced a lot of adversity and continued to rise above it," LaBonte said. "When the opportunity came to make nominations, she was everyone's first thought."

**AWARD NIGHT**

On the night McArthur accepted her NYACCE award, she had plenty of support. Her mother was there along with LaBonte, Castine and Supervisor of Adult Services at OWS Maria Huntington.

"It's an honor and humbling to join someone who is receiving such a special award," Huntington said. "Melissa is committed and has an amazing story. Regardless of what her circumstances were before now, she has overcome those challenges and never given up."

McArthur was one of the final recipients to give her speech, and

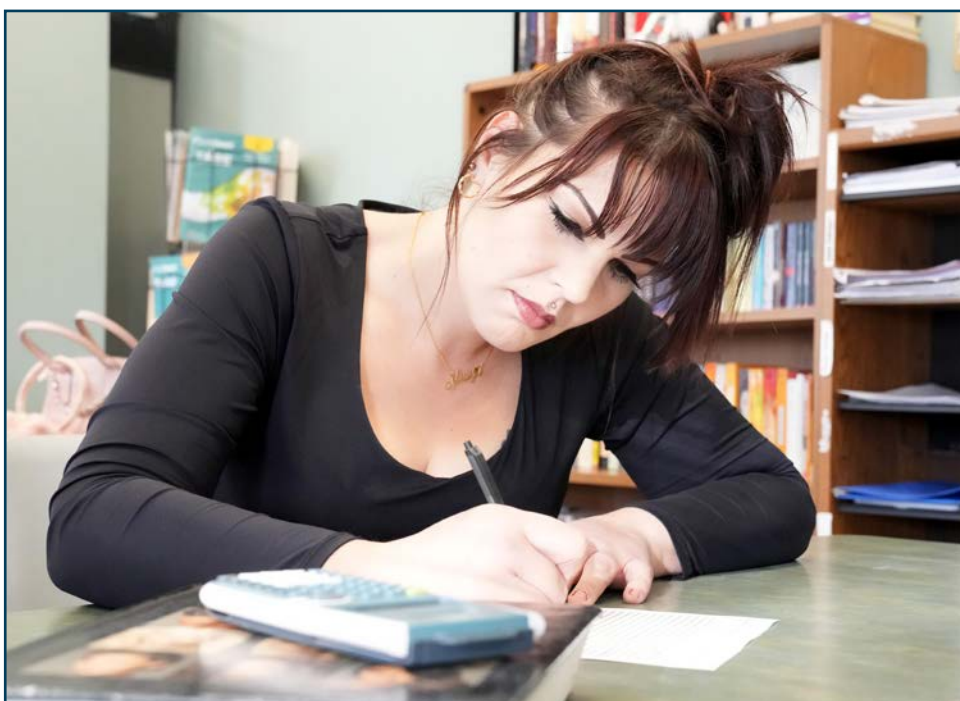
she admitted she was quite nervous before delivering her message. But she took the mindset and motivation she used in her classwork to the stage.

When she reflected on what she said to everyone in attendance that night, she discussed her journey.

"I have had to be really motivated and determined," McArthur said. "I did not have to beg for anything because the opportunities were right there in front of me, but I definitely had to pursue it. I had to figure out how it was going to work. I took things one step at a time."

And with a room full of supporters, she did not shy away from saying how she chooses to approach each day.

"It's about waking up every day and trying to make that day a little better than the day before," McArthur said. "You should always strive to do a little more and be better. That's how to live with the right mindset."

**AWARD: Continued on Page 15**

# School Library Systems Uses ARPA Funding to Support Students

## School Support Services Division

As part of the American Rescue Plan Act, otherwise known as the COVID-19 Stimulus Package, so many entities were boosted back up following the economic downfall caused by the pandemic.

School libraries supported by CVES were part of that group.

In early 2022, our School Library Systems — led by Susanne Ford-Croghan — received nearly \$10,000 in ARPA funding that needed to be used to fit the NYSED DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) Framework.

So Ford-Croghan reached out to all librarians within the 16 component districts of CVES. She asked what eBooks and audio books they would like to have her place an order for, which would be made available in the School Library Systems' Overdrive Library that all schools can access.

"If you think about it, libraries and books are a great tool to reflect and relate to every student in our schools," Ford-Croghan said. "Every school district has limited funds, so the fact we can provide them with these books is fantastic. That's why we are here. We are here to help."

### WORKING TOGETHER

Ford-Croghan was ecstatic once she found out there was extra funding to support school libraries.

Making sure to keep with the guidelines of the funding, all books purchased needed to have a diverse nature.

"This grant was unique because I did not have to apply for it, and there was no lobbying," Ford-Croghan said. "We just had to write out a plan, and the money was there."

And once the money was available, Ford-Croghan and school librarians began to collaborate and see what books



would be selected.

Plattsburgh High School Librarian Tasha Nadge comically described herself looking like a mad scientist saying, "Excellent," and tapping her fingers back and forth in front of her face when she found out about the opportunity.

"With this grant, we all were looking at our collections and wanting to make sure our selections speak to every single student," Nadge said. "When you are a librarian, every student is your student. We are connected to every kid. When there is extra money, it helps us tackle our wish list."

### INCREASING DIVERSITY

Since the eBooks and audio books needed to have a theme centered around diversity, librarians saw the funding as a wonderful opportunity.

"It's great we were able to focus on diverse books as the main focus," Nadge said. "It's so important for all students to see themselves in literacy and also see people that are like and unlike them as main characters."

After Ford-Croghan gathered all feedback and wish list

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**AWARD: Continued from Page 15****GOAL ACCOMPLISHED**

Every student's journey in adult education is unique, and McArthur's is definitely no different.

Leading up to her award ceremony, McArthur had a special moment with her 11-year-old son who out of the blue one night had some kind words to share while she was in his room.

"I remember him telling me, 'Mom, I just want you to know I am proud of you and how hard you have been working. I am proud you won that award because you really deserve it, and I am thankful you are my mom,'" McArthur said. "I am probably not saying it as elegant as he did, but it was really nice that he could tell his mom was doing something good."

Her son will have even more to be proud of now.

As of February 1, 2023, McArthur officially obtained her

GED and will be a High School Equivalency Graduate this spring at Champlain Valley Educational Services.

She plans on taking a business class at Clinton Community College and hopes to one day open her own beauty shop.

"I tell everyone I can about the opportunities that have been presented to me," McArthur said. "I want people to know how good these opportunities are. CVES, CV-TEC and OneWorkSource are amazing places to be and have helped me re-shape my entire life."

**BOOKS: Continued from Page 14**

items from component district librarians, she placed an order on their behalf for the Overdrive Library.

"There is a platform there for us to use and expand upon," Ford-Croghan said. "It's really exciting to see the students benefit from the funding received."

**NEW SELECTION IN ACTION**

Now that Ford-Croghan helped facilitate and execute purchasing for the new eBook selection, school libraries have new options for students.

White Smoke by Tiffany Jackson was one book that Nadge mentioned that has become popular among her students.

"The main character is a Black teenager, and it deals with race, but with a horror theme," Nadge said. "I read the entire book on

one flight and thought it was the best book. I was recommending it to a ton of my students, but I only had one copy. When Susanne bought that as part of the eBook selection, I was excited because now all our kids could read it whenever they wanted. That's a great example of how this grant was helpful."

And according to Nadge, eBooks are still popular with her students. Just a month into 2023, she already had more eBooks checked out than in all of 2019. Now with the addition of a diverse collection, the popularity continues to grow.

"The kids really love the options they have now because I think there's a new mindset that allows them to want to try something new and read something different," Nadge said. "This opens up the doors to other opportunities now because we are seeing plenty of success with this."

# MEMORABLE MOMENTS

“It’s giving him job experience, and he’s made a lot of new friends. He’s done really well with the new teaching staff that he’s come into contact with this year. So coupled with his tech program, he is just loving every bit of his day.” — Special Education Parent, Debbie

[Read more on page 9.](#)

“When I found out I won this award, I was kind of speechless. For the people who know my story, I was at the lowest of lows. When I say low, I mean at the most bottom you can be. But I wanted to change and being back in school has helped greatly.” — Melissa McArthur

[Read more on page 12.](#)

“With this grant, we all were looking at our collections and wanting to make sure our selections speak to every single student. When you are a librarian, every student is your student. We are connected to every kid. When there is extra money, it helps us tackle our wish list.” — Plattsburgh High School Librarian Tasha Nadge

[Read more on page 14.](#)

“We are always working to be better, and we have a really great team at CVES. Our ability to help our school districts and our own employees is powerful.” — CVES Benefits Specialist Kaitlin Bouyea

[Read more on page 6.](#)

“It’s so exciting our students are happy to be here with us. They are eager to learn. They understand the gift they have been given by their home districts to participate in CTE, and it inspires us to be better and do better.” — Director of Career and Technical Education Michele Friedman

[Read more on page 4.](#)

“The benefit of bringing the students on a college visit was opening the door to the possibilities for after graduation. For most of these students, college wasn’t an idea on the table, but it’s an option they should be thinking about.” — Mineville Principal Dr. Grace Stay

[Read more on page 7.](#)

“This is a brand-new service for us. As we evolve this system, it will become even more streamlined and quicker to pay the officials and to bill the schools. It’s only going to get better from here.” — Interscholastic Athletics Administrator and Section VII Executive Director Matt Walentuk

[Read more on page 10.](#)

“The room is versatile and capable of hosting a variety of events. This new component of our facilities is one we are proud of and certainly a fantastic way CVES can provide support to education in the North Country.” — Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services Amy Campbell

[Read more on page 11.](#)