

From Humble Beginnings to Statewide Impact



Celebrating 45 Years of Education, Opportunity & Empowerment

For more than four decades, Vermont Adult Learning (VAL) has opened doors for adult learners across the state. Our story began in 1980, when educator Gail Dowling founded the Vermont Institute for Self-Reliance (VISR) and began offering correspondence courses from a converted chicken coop in East Calais. By 1985, we had secured our first grant from the Vermont Agency of Education, delivering adult basic education in partnership with local high schools.

In the early 1990s, Vermont's education system shifted, requiring adult education grants to go to nonprofit organizations. This change paved the way for VISR to evolve, eventually uniting the regions willing to collaborate into a single provider. When Pixie Loomis joined as Executive Director in 1995, she spearheaded both growth and change, including the launch of English Language

Learning services and, in 1996, the name change to Vermont Adult Learning.

Throughout the years, VAL has continued to champion lifelong learning, from an adult diploma program pioneered by Elizabeth Ready to workplace education partnerships



and the Opening Doors book project, which highlighted the voices and experiences of adult learners across Vermont and beyond. From

one-on-one tutoring to classroom instruction, workforce training, and community collaborations, our programs have grown and adapted to consistently meet learners where they are.

Every milestone in our history reflects the courage of adult learners and the dedication of the staff, volunteers, and partners who support them. With each challenge, we have expanded our services to better meet the diverse needs of the communities we serve, embracing technology, innovation, and collaboration along the way. Our journey is a testament to the lasting impact education can have in shaping futures, transforming lives, and strengthening communities. As we mark more than 40 years of service, we look forward to reflecting on our past and celebrating this milestone with our community throughout the year! ■



Patrick: *“We’re all different puzzle pieces; there’s no one way to fit.”*

“I didn’t realize how important and life-altering education can be, and is,” Patrick reflected.

In his twenties, after taking time to travel, he connected with Vermont Adult Learning’s Windsor County team and met Heather, the tutor who would help him see education in a new light.

“I’ll never forget the moment when Heather told me some people are happy doing the day-to-day, but I was capable of more. I needed that because I felt lost.”

Patrick later attended CCV, where he thrived in his studies. After graduating from CCV, Patrick went on to earn his degree from Johnson State College (now Northern Vermont

University). His passion for education and supporting nontraditional learners led him to become a financial aid counselor at CCV and, later, a global studies major.

After teaching English in China and Japan for nearly a decade, Patrick and his family returned to Vermont. He now works in UVM’s financial aid office and teaches Intro to College and Careers at CCV.

Reflecting on his experiences, Patrick says, “I love that VAL’s mission provides a light and a path for non-traditional learning, which is so sorely needed for people who don’t fit into the shape society has tried to make for them. We’re all different puzzle pieces; there’s no one way to fit.” ■

When Patrick was a teenager, his mother endured a life-changing car accident that required intensive care and support from her family. Not long after, at the age of 16, Patrick dropped out of high school. Flash-forward and he is now an accomplished, world-traveled teacher who proudly refers to himself as a “product of VAL.”

Mary: *“It feels good to support others and give back to other people.”*



our services since. “Everybody here helps me a lot with things.”

VAL teacher Mary Worthington has worked closely with Mary over the past three years to improve her vocabulary and pronunciation, making reading, writing, and conversing more enjoyable.

“Mary is fearless about asking questions and is often the first to volunteer to read. She’s outspoken about things that truly matter to her. She’s already informed us that we have too much junk food in our office,” Mary Worthington shared. “She is compassionate in her concern for others and is seen out in the community helping others. She has a strong sense of rooting out injustice and promoting fairness.”

Being able to read better has helped Mary in her day-to-day life, including working at Middlebury Parks and Rec. When not at work or VAL, Mary enjoys walking around town, visiting with friends, attending hockey games at Middlebury College, and exercising. She participated in the latest Maple Run, ran a marathon for the Special Olympics, and even won bronze, silver, and gold medals for swimming!

But Mary’s accomplishments don’t end there. “I’ve been helping out with people in the community. I try to teach them how to use the bus system and I’ve been helping someone fold her clothes,” she said of her volunteer work at a local group home. “It feels good to support others and give back to other people.” ■

Mary, a lifelong resident of Middlebury, first came to Vermont Adult Learning in 2000. “High school was pretty good but I didn’t read well and got pushed around a lot,” Mary shared. But at VAL, things were different. Mary found belonging and support thanks to her caring instructors and has continued engaging in



A Note From Tara

Meeting the Moment: Why Continued Support for Adult Basic Education Matters Now More Than Ever

Dear Friends,

At Vermont Adult Learning (VAL), we remain committed to helping adults across our state build the foundational academic and workforce skills they need to thrive. But even as demand for our services grows, especially among English Language Learners and working adults, the funding landscape has become increasingly complex and uncertain.

Recent legislative changes have reshaped how Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs are funded, offering increased resources while also introducing new restrictions that limit flexibility. At the same time, federal grants that support workforce development remain frozen, and some are approaching expiration without signs of renewal. These shifts have created real challenges for programs that serve Vermont’s most vulnerable learners, including individuals working to earn high school diplomas, improve literacy, gain digital skills, or prepare for careers that can help lift them and their families out of poverty.

We are doing everything we can to advocate at the state level and adapt our programs to meet the evolving needs of our learners. But to sustain this essential work, we depend on the generosity of supporters like you. Your contributions help us fill critical funding gaps, keep our classrooms open, spark innovation in our programs, and ensure that learners continue making progress.

Thank you for standing with us. Together, we can make sure that all Vermonters have access to the education and opportunities they deserve.

Warm regards,

Tara Brooks, Executive Director

Workforce Development Spotlight: Bobby

Bobby came to VAL’s Energy Works program looking for a fresh start in his career but was unsure of what he wanted to do. He had some experience using power tools and other equipment from his time working in auto garages, and during VAL’s training it was clear he had an interest in the field of weatherization as well as a strong understanding of what employment environments/work cultures he could thrive in. VAL staff were able to connect Bobby with CVOEO, a local weatherization employer. After a meet and greet, job shadow, and ultimately an official interview, Bobby was offered a job and gladly accepted.

Energy Works is helping build Vermont’s building efficiency workforce while equipping participants with skills and certifications that are transferable to general construction and broader trades.

Visit our program page at www.energyworksvermont.org to learn more about upcoming training opportunities!



“I am loving the work we are doing and how it helps the people we are there to weatherize. I say it again and again every day...I love my job!”
- Bobby, Energy Works Participant

Thank You to Our Recent Sponsors!

Honors Level Sponsors

- Handy Toyota/Handy Chevrolet
- Killington Resort
- Rutland Regional Medical Center
- SymQuest
- Vermont Country Store

AP Level Sponsor

- County Tire Center

Salutatorian Level Sponsor

- Bar Harbor Bank & Trust

Contact Janine Fleri, Development Director, to learn more about business sponsorship opportunities: jfleri@vtadultlearning.org

View our Donor Roll of recent supporters online at www.vtadultlearning.org/giving/#donor-roll
Secure online donations accepted at vtadultlearning.org/giving



Vermont Adult Learning
77 College Street, Ste 100
Burlington, VT 05401



Vermont Adult Learning
Learning Lasts a Lifetime!

Vermont Adult Learning's mission is to create an innovative, inclusive, and equitable learning environment that provides personalized opportunities for education and career development for Vermont residents by building relationships, strengthening communities, and fostering lifelong learning.

Chittenden County/Central Office

Billing & Correspondence
77 College Street, Ste 100
Burlington, VT 05401
802-846-7245

Addison County

99 Maple Street, #18
Middlebury, VT 05753
802-388-4392

Franklin & Grand Isle

5 Lemnah Drive, Ste. 3
St. Albans, VT 05478
802-524-9233

Rutland County

16 Evelyn Street, Ste. 101
Rutland, VT 05701
802-755-0617

Windham County

113 Technology Drive
Brattleboro, VT 05301
802-257-9449

Windsor County

100 River Street, Ste. 102
Springfield, VT 05156
802-546-0880

Windsor County

225 Maple Street, Unit 6
White River Junction, VT 05001
802-299-2469



www.VTAdultLearning.org



@VTAdultLearning