



"I came to VAL because I wanted to finish something." ~ Laurentia

"I left school in the 10th grade," Laurentia said. "I was getting up early, staying up late and staying in during recess to study. I worked with tutors. I was working harder than anyone else and, still, I was failing. I was so stressed that I got migraines. My father finally encouraged me to leave school saying, 'It's not worth getting sick.' I came to VAL because I wanted to finish something. I'll have earned 8 of the 18 credits I'm required to finish 12th grade by December."

"Laurentia has been such an inspiration to me as a teacher," said MJ Trask of VAL. "She has an incredible zest for learning and is always willing to go out of her comfort zone to learn new information. It has been a privilege to work with her."

Laurentia, reflecting on working towards her high school diploma in her 50s, said, "People should know it's not as easy as you might think, but the finished product is far worth what it takes to get there!"



Our Work

Vermont Adult Learning (VAL) serves adults ages 16 years and older. Our programs include basic education and literacy, high school completion, GED tutoring and testing, courses for English Language Learners, workforce readiness and development, and transition to post-secondary education. Our services are free.

Visit us at www.vtadultlearning.org.



From our Executive Director

Dear Friends,

As the Winter Solstice approaches, signs of hope emerge in our pandemic-weary landscape. Viable COVID-19 vaccines near approval as plans are made for efficient and equitable

distribution. VAL continues to deliver services, virtually and in-person, per VT Department of Health guidelines. Our staff carry on, teaching and advising and running programs with professionalism and compassion. Our students forge ahead, realizing strides in their learning, despite challenges. Thank you for supporting this important, life-changing work.

It's been quite a year. Wherever you find yourself this holiday season, I wish you a safe, healthy and peaceful time for reflection, rejuvenation and connection.

Be safe and be well.

Hal, hcohen@vtadultlearning.org

Vermont Adult Learning Centers

Central Office

46 South Main Street
Waterbury, VT 05676
802-244-0634

Addison County

282 Boardman Street
Middlebury, VT 05753
802-546-0879

Chittenden County

29 Church Street, #9
Burlington, VT 05401
802-846-7245

Franklin & Grand Isle Counties

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

Rutland County

16 Evelyn Street
Rutland, VT 05701
802-775-0617

Windham County

90 Birge Street
Brattleboro, VT 05301
802-257-9449

Windsor County

White River Junction Location
225 Maple Street, Ste. 6
White River Jct., VT 05001
802-281-4311

Springfield Location
100 River Street, Ste. 102
Springfield, VT 05156
802-546-0879



"I was really nervous about my lack of digital literacy. My teacher loaned me a Chromebook and showed me how to use it. She was a tremendous help."
~Student who earned her GED during the COVID-19 pandemic

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Leave a Legacy:
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Learning
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THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS & STAFF SERVING AMID COVID-19

Congratulations
and
Best Wishes
to
CATHRYN HAYES
Regional Director
VAL-Windham County
on her retirement!

WAYS to SUPPORT OUR WORK

- Check or Credit Card
- Employer Matching
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- Goods and Services
- Tribute and Memorial Gifts
- Lifetime Planning

Please contact Katherine Stamper, Development Director, at kstamper@vtadulthoodlearning.org or (802) 735-1670 to discuss any of

MISSION

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

Volunteer Spotlight: Dee Dee O'Brien

Dee Dee grew up in Los Angeles. She studied molecular biology and biochemistry before earning a Master's Degree in Public Health. She spent time working in research labs and, eventually, shifted careers to graphic arts. An eye for detail in a lab specimen translates easily to an eye for detail in design. She also actively studies French, a helpful skill in her role at VAL.

Dee Dee has volunteered in VAL's Beginning Literacy classes, alongside teacher Anne Clift, since 2017. She supports English Language Learners.

"I love the combination of people from so many different countries. We currently have students from China, Colombia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. We've all become friends," Dee Dee said. "I like when I can use my knowledge of French to help a student understand."

"The students love her and it is obvious that she cares about them, too," Anne Clift said. "She's an exemplary volunteer and a huge help to me in class as well."



Are you interested in volunteering at VAL?
Contact Katherine at
kstamper@vtadulthoodlearning.org



From an urban metropolis in Mexico to a Vermont Dairy Farm

"We (Mexicans) do try to find a job and create a better life here. In Mexico, you can work and work and still have not enough money to eat." ~ Pedro

Pedro is an eager student of English in Leigh Smith's TESOL class at VAL's Franklin-Grand Isle Learning Center. It doesn't matter that there is a pandemic. Classes are held virtually.

Pedro is from Puebla, Mexico, a city in east-central Mexico with a population of 1.5 million people. The city is known for painted Talavera tiles, produced locally, and Puebla Cathedral, built in the fifteenth century. Pedro's mother, father and sister remain in Mexico. Pedro regularly sends money home to help his family.

"Part of my dream is that I can help my family so they can have enough to eat and a better life," Pedro said.

Pedro arrived in the United States in 2012 at age 17 and came to Vermont because he learned there were work opportunities on dairy farms. He had friends from Mexico who worked in Franklin County and they encouraged him to come.

"When I started, I was milking cows," Pedro said. "I did well and they gave me other opportunities to do other tasks. I learned a little bit of English so it was better to communicate with my boss. I've been at the same farm now for five years."

Pedro maintains a full-time work schedule, yet still makes time to study English. He recognizes English is important if he wants to build a life for himself in the United States.

"When you can't communicate, everything is harder," Pedro said. "If you shop for groceries, you can't ask a question. If you go to the barber, you can't tell them how you want your hair to be cut. If you go to Walmart to buy a shirt and you can't find your size, you can't explain what you need. Learning English also helps me at work if I have to ask my boss a question. I can help my co-workers, too, if they don't understand English."

"My teacher, Leigh, is a very nice lady and a good teacher," Pedro said.



"I have been teaching Pedro for several years now, and watching his second language growth has been fascinating and gratifying," Leigh said. "But beyond that, I am inspired by Pedro's deep love for his family and his friends. He is an exceptionally hard worker, and his drive to help others and to do the best he can with whatever circumstances are before him is a model for everyone -- not just us in the classroom."

Individuals like Pedro support and help to sustain Vermont's time-honored tradition of dairy farming. This city-boy from Mexico appears to have adjusted to life in Vermont.

"Everything is so green here," Pedro said.

Workforce Development News



New Study supports value of English Learning Programs

Learning English enhances employability, supports workplace advancement and increases income potential. New research, released by the New York City-based nonprofit Economic Mobility Corporation (www.economicmobilitycorp.org), provides evidence reinforcing the significant value of foreign-born workers learning English. Eight hundred participants, half of which enrolled in English for Advancement classes and career counseling offered via Boston-based Jewish Vocational Services, were monitored over 3 years.

VAL has historically partnered with Rhino Foods, Twincraft Skincare, UVM Medical Center and other employers to offer workplace-based English At Work courses. Classes are typically conducted one-hour before or after a shift change with employees arriving early or staying late to participate. Curricula address everyday language needs for community participation with the added benefit of integrating industry-specific vocabulary, tailored to the workplace and paving the way for advancement.

VAL recognizes the value of helping students, across our programming, develop the skills, credentials and confidence they need to define and find their success. Please contact Hal Cohen at hcohen@vtadultlearning.org if you would like to explore a partnership with us for your business.

Link to the study:

<https://economicmobilitycorp.org/stepping-interim-findings-jvs-bostons-english-advancement-show-large-earnings-gains/>



Email kstamper@vtadultlearning.org to receive this newsletter via email. Type GO GREEN in Subject Line.



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46 South Main Street

Waterbury, VT 05676