

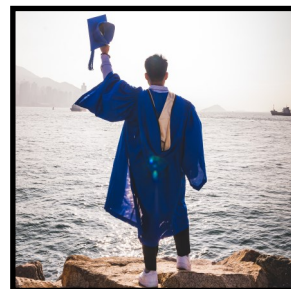


## **Bobby: From washing canteen trucks as a kid to an aspiring coder**

"I've been on my own since I was around 12 or 13," Bobby said. "Things weren't good at home, so I left. I didn't have an address. I was homeless, forced to leave school. I moved to Vermont to live with a friend's family and attended Mount Mansfield Union (High School), but that didn't work out."

At 49, Bobby retains his Boston accent and strong work ethic. He started earning his way, washing canteen trucks as a kid in Charlestown, Massachusetts. In Vermont, he worked on construction sites and in restaurant kitchens. He managed Burlington-area movie theaters before the COVID-19 Pandemic. Bobby is on track to earn his high school diploma in December 2022 and has been accepted to the Burlington Code Academy.

"I started at VAL a few years ago," Bobby said. "I wanted to be a better role model for my kids as a single dad. I wanted to practice what I preach. My life hasn't always been easy, but I'm a stronger person for it."



### **Our Work**

**Vermont Adult Learning (VAL) helps students, ages 16+, build assets for success. We provide reading, writing, math, financial literacy, English Language Learning, academic & career advising, workforce development, and high school completion services. Our services are FREE!**

Visit us at [www.vtadultlearning.org](http://www.vtadultlearning.org).



### **From our Executive Director**

Dear Friends,

Optimism is in the air along with the scent of lilacs. We are emerging from Pandemic-mode, serving students in person and online, running workforce development trainings and getting

folks into sustainable energy jobs.

VAL recently launched a Business Sponsorship Program and you will see on Page 2 some of the companies actively supporting our work. They and we recognize VAL English Language Learning and High School Completion students are vital members of Vermont's community and economy.

Please reach out to me if you would like to chat further!  
Be safe and be well,

**Hal Cohen**

**Executive Director**

**[hcohen@vtadultlearning.org](mailto:hcohen@vtadultlearning.org)**

### **Vermont Adult Learning Centers**

#### **Addison County / Central Office**

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

#### **Chittenden County**

77 College Street  
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**

999 Putney Road  
Brattleboro, VT 05301  
802-257-9449

#### **Windsor County**

White River Junction Location  
225 Maple Street, Ste. 6  
White River Jct., VT 05001  
802-299-2469

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

#### **Billing/Correspondence**

P.O. Box 539  
Waitsfield, VT 05673  
802-560-4057



## Our Students Matter

"Everybody learns differently. VAL gives students more options to be successful."  
~ Rebecca

## Board Of Directors

**Martha Adams**  
**Edmund A. Booth**  
**Jim Coutts**  
**Paul Dragon**  
**Dee Gilbert**  
**Ashley Griggs**  
**Tuipate F. Mubiay**  
**Marcy Stephens**  
**Richard Tulikangas**  
**Hal Cohen, *Ex-Officio***

## Thank you to our recent supporters

### INDIVIDUALS

-Anonymus  
-Liane Barrera  
-Iris Berezin  
-Bambi Hatch  
-Brooke Herndon & Eric Miller  
-Jay Kibling  
-Pixie Loomis  
-Martha McLaughlin  
-Clara & Garth Peterson  
-Kate & Bill Schubart  
-Kathleen & Gary Starr  
-Elizabeth Steele  
-Bird Stasz  
-Sally Waldron

### IN HONOR OF

-Eric Peterson

### IN MEMORY OF

-Sally Ovia  
-Larry Sudlow

## Support our Work

Check or Credit Card Gifts  
Employer Matching  
Stocks, Securities, etc.  
Goods and Services

### ORGANIZATIONS

-Amazon Smile  
-City of Burlington CDBG Grant Program  
-Crosby-Gannet Fund of VT Community Foundation  
-Grapevine  
-Green Mountain United Way  
-Office of Senator Bernie Sanders  
-The Joy Foundation  
-Tulgey Wood Foundation  
-Vermont Principals' Association  
-VT Small Business Development Center  
-Vermont Women's Fund of VT Community Foundation

## VERMONT ADULT LEARNING BUSINESS SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

~ Inaugural Members ~

-Bar Harbor Bank & Trust  
-Freeman French Freeman  
-Handy Toyota  
-Rutland Regional Medical Center  
-Sunny Hollow Dental  
-SymQuest  
-Town Fair Tire Foundation  
-Upper Valley Food Co-op  
-Vermont Country Store

Contact us to learn about the benefits of being a VAL Business Sponsor!

Katherine Stamper  
Development Director  
kstamper@vtadulthoodlearning.org  
Let us know if your name was inadvertently left off of the donor list.  
**Thank you!**

## Volunteer Spotlight: Thank you, Marion Cushner!

VAL volunteer Marion Cushner lives in Williston. She moved to Vermont from San Diego to be closer to her grandchildren. She serves on her local Restorative Justice Board, swims, walks and enjoys playing mahjong. Marion has made time to volunteer as a beloved VAL tutor for nearly a decade.

"I taught children my whole career," Marion said. "I thought it would be a new experience to teach adults. My first assignment was with a woman from Burundi who was taking an English (ELL) class and needed a little extra help. We worked together for three years and she made good progress in speaking, reading and writing simple sentences and paragraphs."

"Marion is very committed to our students," said Anne Clift, VAL ELL Teacher. She is very dedicated and has tutored via Zoom during the Pandemic."



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



## Hideo: From Japan to Vermont, with interesting stops in between

***"I like the freedom in my studies at VAL. No one pushes me."***

***~ Hideo***

Hideo was born in Japan in 1953 as his country was still recovering from the devastation of its World War II defeat. The United States, with fellow Allies, occupied and facilitated rebuilding of this Pacific Island nation between 1945 and 1952. General Douglas MacArthur led the effort promoting military, political, economic and social reforms. It's no wonder that Japan's Constitution contains elements from the U.S. Constitution, accented by decidedly Japanese cultural elements.



Hideo's parents and three older brothers worked to help rebuild Japan's war-ravaged economy. His father and brother were chefs. Hideo spent much time at home with his grandmother, Matsue.

"My grandmother taught me to cook rice and chop vegetables without cutting my fingers," Hideo said with a laugh as he remembered lessons learned in the family kitchen.

When Hideo graduated from high school, he entered an apprenticeship to become a chef. His ambition was to become a chef of French cuisine and he trained for this profession. He dreamed of moving to France to perfect his craft and, after several years' experience in Japan, Hideo asked his chef to tap into his extensive culinary network. An opportunity did open up, but not in France. At age twenty-two, Hideo found himself cooking at the Japanese Embassy in Sofia, Bulgaria, a then-Soviet satellite nation.

"I experienced a different culture, living in a communist country," Hideo said.

When the Japanese ambassador completed his tour of duty in Bulgaria, Hideo returned to work in Japan and, after some time, asked his chef, again, if there might be an opportunity for him to hone his cooking skills in France. Alas, France was not an option BUT there was a job in the United States. Hideo arrived at the famed Benihana Japanese Restaurant in Boston. He was twenty-five years old; he carried one suitcase, one backpack and his prized Chef's Knife. The young chef plied his craft preparing Japanese, not French, cuisine in a kitchen where Japanese was spoken, negating the immediate need to speak much English. Hideo still understood and could read English well enough to become a U.S. Naturalized Citizen.

Now that he is retired, Hideo is studying with VAL ELL teacher Leigh Smith to improve his ability to speak English.

"Hideo pushes himself, to astonishing levels," Smith said. "He has overcome a reticence to study online, and has stretched himself to meet new challenges in reading, writing, and OLC (Online Learning Center) discussions. I have rarely seen a student engage in learning so eagerly, yet with humility, while also encouraging his classmates."

# Vermont Adult Learning

P.O. Box 539

Waitsfield VT 05673



---

## Energy Works Trainee: Meet Nicole



Weatherization had been a long-simmering career interest for Nicole. It checked so many boxes for her: sustainability, social determinants of health, poverty relief, and addressing the inequitable impacts of climate change.

"I was working and looking for a career change," Nicole said. "I had been toggling between environmental sustainability and human services in my search for purpose-driven work. I got on my computer, read about Energy Works, and decided I was just going to apply. I'm glad I did. Going hands on, within the first days, was extremely helpful. It helped me ask myself, 'Can I handle working in an attic or being in a basement for half a day?' (She could.) It was boots on the ground within the first days and the technical skills—power tools and principles of building design—were so helpful."



VAL is grateful to the Bowes Health Trust, The Vermont Low Income Trust For Electricity, HireAbility, and other partners for supporting Energy Works.

To learn more or sign up for an upcoming training, contact Jeff at [jnerney@vtadulthoodlearning.org](mailto:jnerney@vtadulthoodlearning.org) or (802) 779-0057.

Email [kstamper@vtadulthoodlearning.org](mailto:kstamper@vtadulthoodlearning.org) to receive this newsletter via email. Type GO GREEN in Subject Line.