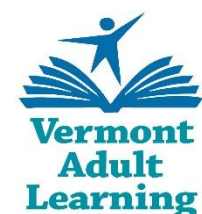


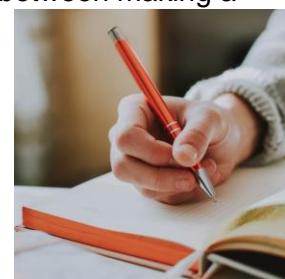
VERMONT'S ADULT EDUCATION & LITERACY SERVICE PROVIDERS HELP ACHIEVE STATE GOALS

The Vermont Adult Education and Literacy Network (AELN) is a network of four community-based nonprofit service providers that provide literacy services to adults across the state of Vermont, so that they can achieve their goals and fully participate in their lives and communities. Adult Basic Education programs began in 1964 with the passage of the Economic Opportunity Act. That 1964 Federal legislation established a state and federal partnership to focus on the most basic of educational skills for adults (individuals 16+ who are out of school) who had not earned a high school credential or who had a diploma but did not have skills equivalent to a twelfth-grade education. This original legislation has evolved to be known as the federal Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, Title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), as “the principal source of federal funding for states for adult education programs.”

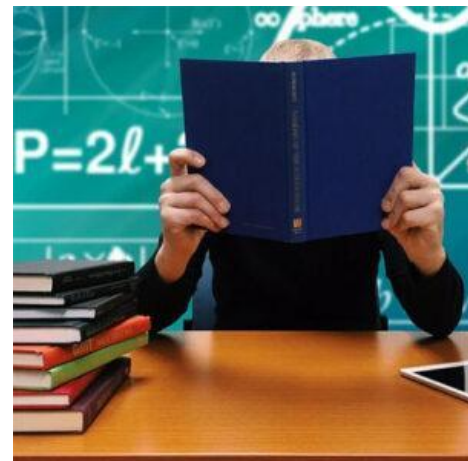


The services that the Vermont Adult Education and Literacy Network provide are critical to achieving Vermont's stated goals for individuals and families, and the need for literacy and adult education programs leading to career and college readiness is higher than ever as Vermonters recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. Students are at the center of our work, and Adult Education and Literacy providers offer a broad range of services that are specifically tailored to each student's needs. Our services change people's lives and builds their asset bank, so that our students can pursue further education or careers that align with their passions and goals. The bullets below represent state goals and population outcomes that Vermont has prioritized. Below each bullet are examples of how the Vermont Adult Education and Literacy Network helps Vermonters achieve these goals.

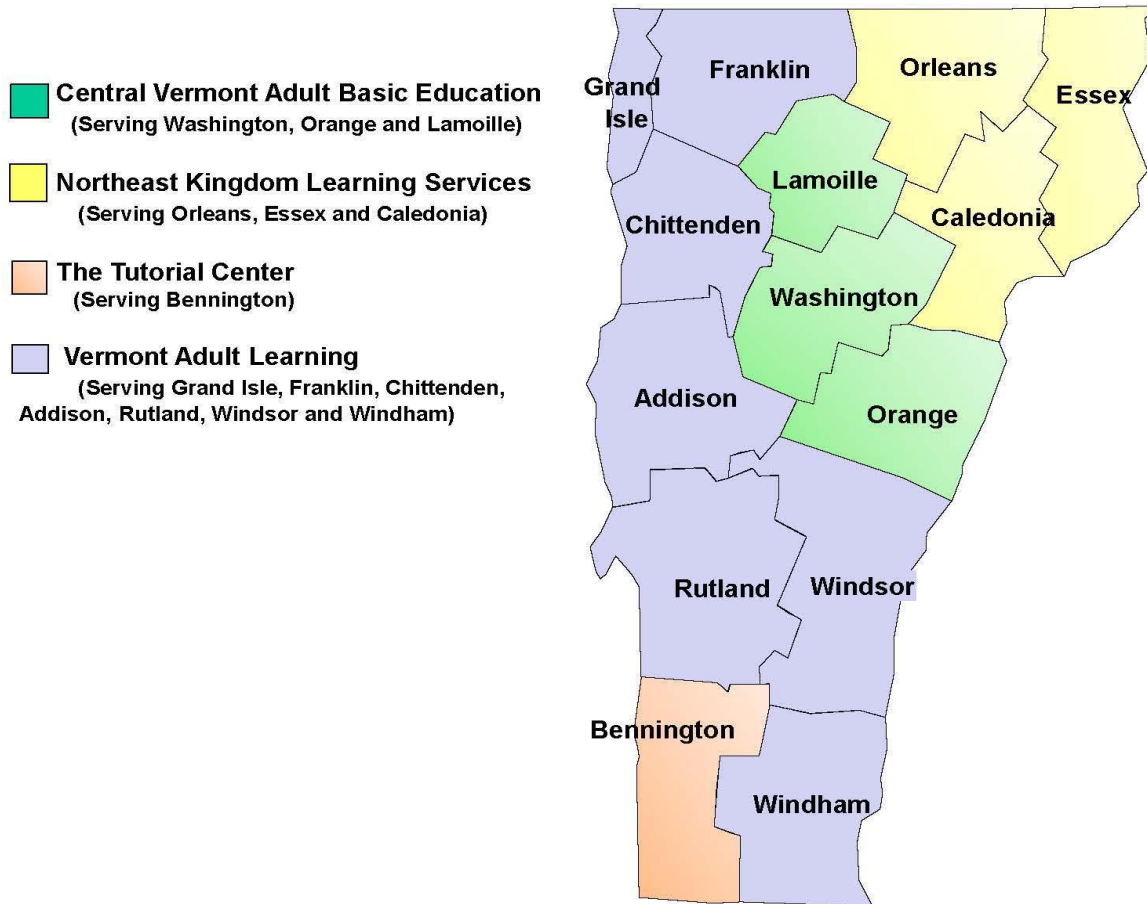
- **Vermont provides learners with educational services of the scope and rigor needed for the attainment of a high school diploma.**
 - The four non-profit organizations that make up the Vermont Adult Education and Literacy Network are the official, state designated service providers for the High School Completion Program (HSCP). The AELN also provides GED educational services for Vermonters. These two pathways help people of all ages and backgrounds to obtain a high school credential at the speed and rigor that is suited for them.
 - Success looks different for every student, and every student's success stems from a shift in mindset. We help students to identify concrete goals and then break those goals down into steps. We celebrate every achievement so that students can see that they can succeed.
 - Students like Cullen at The Tutorial Center in Bennington are able to earn their high school diploma in a flexible way that works around busy job schedules, so that no one has to choose between making a living or earning an education.
- **Vermonters are prepared for good paying jobs available from Vermont's many diversified employers and work in a variety of sectors.**
 - AELN Service Providers help new Vermonters like Petagaye at Central Vermont Adult Basic Education work towards their dream jobs. Through the High School Completion Program, Petagaye was able to upskill in her career, from housekeeping to earning her LNA degree.
 - The AELN provides volunteer and entry-level job opportunities for individuals who graduate from their programs, helping students like Cheyanna at Northeast Kingdom Learning Services, Inc. build the skills needed to attain an office job in Vermont's retail industry.
 - Adult Education and Literacy Service Providers give students the opportunity to include career training as part of their high school completion requirements, allowing students to obtain their Diploma while preparing for the workforce.



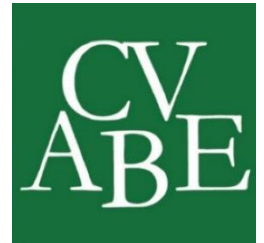
- **Vermont's children and young people achieve their potential.**
 - Adult Education and Literacy Service Providers help young people like Sarah explore their passions and take control of their future through unconventional routes. Allison was exposed to more areas of the workforce through hands-on learning at Vermont Adult Learning after exiting Brattleboro Union High School, which allowed her to found an interior design LLC by age 25.
 - Our work often involves changing expectations so that students can see their own potential. AELN's programs provide the flexibility and knowledge needed for young people like Keionna at The Tutorial Center to “accomplishing goals [they] didn't think were possible”, such as having a steady career and personal stability as a Bank Teller by age 20.
 - Young students like Drew at Vermont Adult Learning's Chittenden Center receive the support and resources necessary to overcome significant barriers and excel in life. Drew is a 2020 recipient of the John H. Chafee Scholarship for Foster Care Youth and plans to attend college in Vermont after receiving his high school diploma at VAL.
- **Vermonters with disabilities and elders live with dignity and in settings they prefer.**
 - Adult Education and Literacy Service Providers help older Vermonters live with dignity, like Earlene at Vermont Adult Learning, who is almost 60 and can now read a newspaper, fill out a job application, read directions for a recipe and pay her bills on her own.
 - Students in the AELN are often students who left conventional schooling because it didn't work for them. Neurodivergent students like Zoe at Central Vermont Adult Basic Education are able to obtain their high school diploma with individualized learning plans that reflect their goals and interests and are sensitive to their needs.
 - Adult Education and Literacy Service Providers help older Vermonters like Steve at Central Vermont Adult Basic Education develop new skills needed to succeed in modern day business, allowing them to age with dignity and pride in what they are doing. Steve received technical training with computers and went on to start up a CBD e-commerce business.
- **Vermont has a Prosperous Economy.**
 - Many graduates of Adult Education and Literacy Service Provider programs go on to start their own businesses, like Martha at Central Vermont Adult Basic Education. Martha, a single mother from Honduras, was able to accomplish her dream of owning her own hair salon after learning English and completing her high school diploma at CVABE.
 - AELN programs like the Bennington Bridge to College Program at The Tutorial Center, Inc. helps put students like Roger on a successful career path in professions like nursing, helping to alleviate Vermont's serious labor shortages.
 - Many students in AELN programs are parents dedicated to providing better lives for their children through economic endeavors. Parents like John, a refugee from Myanmar, earned his citizenship and high school diploma while receiving services at Vermont Adult Learning, allowing him to start-up a sushi restaurant in Middlebury and providing financial security for his children in a culturally relevant way.



Vermont's Four Adult Education and Literacy Providers Help Achieve State Goals



According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, full-time workers age 25 and older without high school diplomas earn about \$140 **less per week** than those with high school diplomas. Many students who earn their high school diploma through the AELN go on to attend college in Vermont. Workers with a bachelor's degree (and no additional degree) have median weekly earnings that are more than double the average weekly earnings of workers the same age without a high school diploma.



Zoe, 19
Moretown (Washington County)

Like many freshmen in high school, I found myself absorbed in teenage experience, one that comes hand in hand with melodrama and trials. That would be distracting for any student, but as someone on the Autism spectrum, it really distracted me from my studies. Due to my Neuro-divergent mind, the classroom experience was one of stress and distraction. The difficulties of social anxiety caused a divide between me, and my ability to learn. I found myself stuck between a metaphorical rock and hard place. I had the desire to learn, but I couldn't retain any long term knowledge from your traditional high school setting. After a less than stellar freshman experience, I started my journey into alternative schooling.

I knew someone who works at CVABE. My Mother and I struck up a conversation with him and he brought up the High School Completion Program (HSCP), as an alternative. I had been newly diagnosed as being on the spectrum, and being Neuro-divergent I knew I didn't want to go back to high school. It didn't work for me.

The individuality of HSCP made my experience engaging, and fun filled. Although the high school gave me requirements that had been reached, there was no set curriculum. I got to design what I wanted to learn based on my goals and interests. It made it much more impactful for me, and I needed that. In HSCP I learned that an alternative education works. It showed me that I have every right to learn as much as someone who can do it in the classroom setting. It showed me that I can learn.



Martha, 44
Montpelier (Washington County)

I came from Honduras to Vermont with my husband. My husband left and I was in Vermont with no family and no English. The only way that I communicated was by using Spanish-English dictionaries and pointing at words. A friend suggested that I go to CVABE. When I started there I didn't know any English, not even the difference between "hi" and "hello." We worked on phrases I'd need to get a job. All I could say was, "Hi, I am Martha"; "I looking for job." I was starting from the beginning. Within two months I was speaking English, and I didn't even realize it. I thought I'd never "get it," but I did.

The highest level of school I finished in Honduras was 6th grade. When my oldest child was a junior in high school he was working on college applications, and it wasn't something I could help him with. I wanted to be a good example for my children. I wanted to challenge myself and decided to get a high school diploma. When I was working on my diploma with CVABE, I was given the opportunity to include career training as part of my high school completion requirements. I got my high school diploma and Cosmetology license.

I wanted my own salon, where I could give back by hiring people and paying them well, and also have cosmetology students come and cut hair in a real salon. In a year I had my own space. It's my salon! It was like a dream come true! It opened opportunities for my life. Without school I wouldn't be where I am, able to provide for my kids. My family has hope. I now ask myself, "What is the next opportunity that will come to me?"



**Meegen Smith, 42
Randolph**

As far back as 6th grade, and probably earlier, I struggled with academics. I dropped out of high school at the beginning of 9th grade. I didn't have any family structure. My father was an alcoholic and my mother had Borderline Personality Disorder and Munchausen by Proxy. There was no structure, and definitely no focus on school. I had been running with the wrong crowd, school became less and less important. I dropped out at 16, had a child at 17, and living life was too important.

By the time I was 20 I had 2 kids. I married my husband while he was doing time in the State penitentiary. My relationship with him was very abusive. By the time I was 24 I had 4 kids, and I hurt my back really badly, which required emergency surgery. I had bulging discs and degenerative joint disease. Nobody ever told me to lose weight and take care of myself, and it ended up putting me in the hospital. That turned into a 10 year addiction to prescription painkillers. I don't even remember the ages of 25-30. I was mixed up with the wrong people, and I ended up incarcerated

for a year. In that year I got clean, and realized that life wasn't for me anymore. I got out of jail and had nothing. I started working and also developed a drinking habit. I worked in housekeeping, and worked and worked and worked. I couldn't live like that anymore, being overweight and working that much. I started doing 20 minute workouts at home.

Over the years I had started to study for my GED "I don't know how many times." I picked it up again with CVABE. It took me 3 ½ years of studying, and I passed the English, Science, and Social Studies sections pretty easily, but I had a really hard time with Math. CVABE found me a volunteer who was a math specialist. I stopped beating myself up for having trouble with the math, and 3 years ago I officially passed and earned my GED. Having the GED gave me self-confidence and self-worth. For so long my mentality had been that because I had learning disabilities, I couldn't learn. I had a goal to become a licensed personal trainer, and had been told that I needed my GED for that. It really kicked my desire to get the GED into overdrive. That part actually turned out not to be true. I didn't need my GED, but I have no regrets for putting in all that time.

After I got my GED I studied to become a personal trainer. I wanted to get fit, and rather than learn from another trainer I wanted to learn it for myself. Before I went to CVABE to study for the GED I really didn't know how to learn. There I was taught reading skills, and other tricks to help me retain information. I couldn't have become a personal trainer without all those things I learned at CVABE. I learned how to learn, and it set me up to pass my Personal Trainer exam. It took me a few tries, but I did it. I've been into journaling and meditation. I've created a life for myself that I once could only dream of. I have a great job with great benefits. It's mind-blowing that I can do this. I've gone from jail, addiction, and pain to barbells, protein, power, and a Lexus!



**Petagaye, 46
Hyde Park (Lamoille County)**

I was born and raised in Jamaica. I made it to 9th grade in school, when I got pregnant. Life was very hard for me. The only hope I had for myself was to finish high school, but in Jamaica, education after primary school costs money, even adult education high schools. My real dreams were for my daughter. In 2005, a friend of mine met an American guy who she thought I'd like. We fell in love over the phone. After a while we decided to get married. My husband started the paperwork to bring me over, and it took 1.5 years before I received a Green Card.

I worked as a housekeeper for most of the time after we moved to Vermont. I knew I wanted to educate myself, so I called CVABE. As I was bringing up my skills, I had the goal of becoming a US citizen. My teacher at CVABE helped me study. My daughter and I became US citizens on the same day!

I wanted to change my career, but wasn't sure to what. I was sick of housekeeping. My big goal was to finally get my high school diploma. I knew I wanted to educate myself. In the HSCP program, I had options to study for a career as part of my plan. I had made the decision to become an LNA, and was able to take the course. I earned my high school diploma in the spring of 2020. I feel amazing. I have my citizenship, diploma and LNA license. CVABE is wonderful. I wish I had teachers like that when I was a kid.

NORTHEAST KINGDOM LEARNING SERVICES, INC.



**Jess Devenger, 34 years old
Newport, Vermont**

When I first came to NEKLS in 2008, it was in Hardwick due to problems I had with my high school. I had dropped out with the permission of my guardian so that I could go to NEKLS to graduate. I was 19 at the time. I stopped going there a few months later because my life had changed with a move and the start of a new family.

I came back again in 2011 to the NEKLS in Newport because I was determined to get my high school diploma. I was asked which route I would like to take, either the adult diploma program or to get my G.E.D. I chose the adult diploma program because it meant more to me and because I was determined. Within the next six months, I was ready for my graduation, thanks to the amazing staff here at NEKLS.

Now that it is 2023, a new year and new beginnings will be happening. At the end of 2022, I came back to NEKLS again due to my case manager reaching out and telling me about a class I could do with someone at NEKLS that would look good on my resume once completed. After doing the class for a couple of months, my teacher asked if I would be interested in volunteering and assisting with some administrative work. My response was absolutely, as office work has been my main goal since graduating. So, with the assistance of my case manager, the Vermont Department Labor, and soon to be Hireability, I will be working for NEKLS starting in July!



**Carver Parson, 17 Yrs. Old
Traveler/Aspiring Engineer**

I first stepped foot in NEKLS in 2021 with one goal in mind, to get my diploma. Truthfully, it was just one of the options to do so, but it was the one that felt most right straight away. The amount of accommodation was just what I needed in what was admittedly a rougher patch of my life. I had been kicked out of school, kicked out of home, and I was feeling like my future was falling apart in front of me. NEKLS understood. NEKLS helped. From mending family bonds to just finding my footing by traveling, they gave me the time to do so. This was undoubtedly the top reason NEKLS became my springboard to success.

The actual schooling was set to my own pace so it could be as fast as I wanted and still take breaks too. The ability to just control that pace makes all the difference, but they let us have a degree of control over the style as well. It all allows for a new excitement for learning that classical education can squash out of too many kids that don't fit the average mold, and further discovery towards the information field you actually want to learn about. I learned more about engineering in my time at NEKLS than all of the time spent researching the subject before. I didn't even have to take lots of tests.

Now that I'm finished and my sights are set back on the future, I know what general steps to take towards my goals, and all of the paths to get to them. Being an aeronautical engineer doesn't just seem like a good job because the idea pleases me of building and designing rockets, but because I've actually personally explored the field and found that I really do like it. I never would have really let my love of traveling grow to the point it has today either, all because they allowed me to really take the time and do so. My point in all of this is that, if you really want to explore a future that YOU want, it pays dividends to explore all the paths to get there with NEKLS included.



**Trey Lalime, 27 Years old
Morrisville, Vermont (formerly from Orleans, Vermont)**

For starters, I don't even know when I started at NEKLS. I wanted to say somewhere between 2015 and 2016, maybe earlier. I got kicked out of high school my junior year and was not allowed to go back my senior year. NEKLS gave me the opportunity to complete my remaining credits and eventually receive my diploma. It was a year of me showing up in spurts or not showing up at all, and the process was prolonged. I believe I was missing for two to three years. I was procrastinating on my own dime and didn't have the motivation. NEKLS never gave up on me; my HSCP manager, to be exact, never gave up on me. She gave me a huge push when I met up and worked with a gentleman down in Stowe who also volunteered for NEKLS, and he got me to believe in myself again. Those chats we had gave me the motivation to get my diploma.

As of June 2021, I received my diploma after months of work and testing. "It all starts with a conversation and leads to the next one," the volunteer said of life. NEKLS believed in me and never gave up on me; without those conversations, I don't think that I would have reconnected with NEKLS.

Today I work for UPS; I love it, and in the late summer I will be a dad. Thank you to NEKLS for never giving up on me, and to my HSCP manager, thank you!



**Keionna, 20
Bennington**

I couldn't be any more grateful for what this program has done for me. This program brought light to the fact that every position in life is vital. Whether it be a company CEO, bus driver, janitor, teacher, astronaut; in unity we make the world a remarkable place. No person is more or less important than the last. I started schooling at The Tutorial Center at 16 years old, hopeless for a future I deemed unpleasurable and mediocre. Three and a half years later, I am now a woman accomplishing goals I didn't think were possible. My out-of-the-ordinary daily life was accommodated because of The Tutorial Center's flexibility. This also enabled me to work more often granting me the money for my license, first car, and apartment. I also have time to properly take care of my brother. I was able to learn at my own pace on essentially my own time. I gained amazing genuine relationships that contributed to my success at school as well as other parts of the community. The Tutorial Center is an amazing school in Bennington especially for those whose lives don't fit within society's typical margins. I believe The Tutorial Center contributed to my success. Overall, my entire experience felt very personal and steady. The Tutorial Center

provided me with a very individualized, independent, education that allowed me to gain lifelong knowledge as well as early exposure to adulthood

**Roger, Practicing Nurse, 35
Londonderry**

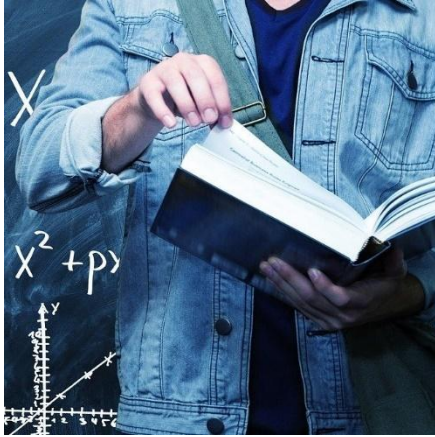
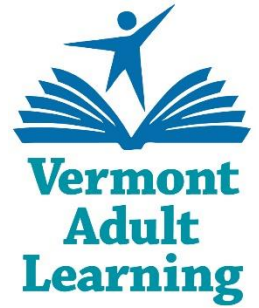
My journey in pursuing a nursing degree began at The Tutorial Center. The Bennington Bridge to College Program was one of the many TTC resources available and the program got me started on my college journey. The sooner you start pursuing your dreams, the sooner you will realize them. The Tutorial Center has a wealth of human resources, information, and support available for just about anyone who needs academic help.

**Cullen, 19
Arlington**

At the beginning of my senior year of high school, I was faced with a tough decision. I had to figure out how to support myself while living independently as well as graduate high school with a diploma. I could not go to school full time because I had to work. In the process of researching options, I came across the Tutorial Center. I realized that they could help me achieve my goal.

I enrolled, and started going to classes two days a week. This new school week was much more conducive to my heavy work schedule. As if that weren't enough, I had the flexibility to finish all of the classwork at my own pace. Eventually, I graduated with a diploma from the Tutorial Center after sixteen months. I am extremely grateful to have been able to enroll in the Tutorial Center. Had I not been presented with this opportunity, I would have had to take my GED which for me, was the less desirable option. The staff at the Tutorial Center were kind, welcoming, and helpful, and made my decision to finish high school a stress free and rewarding one.

VERMONT ADULT LEARNING



Drew, 20
Burlington
Vermont Adult Learning - Chittenden County Learning Center
2020 Recipient, John H. Chafee Scholarship for Foster Care Youth

When I was two, I moved with my mom and sister from Detroit, Michigan to Burlington, Vermont. Growing up, I spent time going back and forth and spent summers and all of my free time in Detroit. My father was an alcoholic and lived in a very dangerous neighborhood. I remember, sometimes, I would walk with him to get more beer from the store late at night and I would hear gunshots and tires screeching. When I visited my father on holiday breaks, sometimes, we would have to stay inside on New

Year's Eve because of people shooting off guns into the air. I noticed that this is what lack of opportunity looks like; this is what life is like at rock bottom.

While spending a contrast of time in Detroit, I also spent all of my academic time in Vermont where my mom was going to school to be a teacher. Going from my dad's house, which was like the apocalypse, to a vegan, college educated mom was drastically different. My mom always held me accountable for my actions and made sure I was morally sound. My mom had her first child at sixteen and me at twenty. She moved out at my age and decided she wanted more than what Detroit had to offer. She moved to Vermont and worked a few jobs, took care of us and excelled in school. I had this view of what happens when you go to college and do not go to college. I saw my mom living a happier life from going to college. I watched her personally get a Bachelor's Degree and two Master's Degrees.

For a while, I was very depressed, trying to find my place in the world. I started not completing my schoolwork to my full capability and felt trapped. I experienced health issues requiring hospitalization. I spent a year in foster care and lived in a group home. I connected with VAL's Chittenden Learning Center to make a plan to finish my high school diploma. They were flexible and helped me get my requirements completed, putting me one step further in life. I am focused on going to school to become a lawyer and am working on college applications. I want the opportunity to ensure I will be successful. I believe college is the only route fathomable for me to reach my goals.



John, 41
Middlebury
Owner, [Sushi Maru](#)
Vermont Adult Learning - Addison County Learning Center

As members of the Kachin minority in Myanmar, we had no human rights. We lost everything as human beings. We had no freedom of expression and no good jobs. I came to the U.S., the land of freedom. I came here and I feel very safe. The reason I am trying to do what I can is for my children. My ambition is for my children to be anything they want to be. My VAL teachers and my tutor helped me very much. I'm so grateful and thankful to be here in Vermont. Middlebury is a quiet place and very convenient. I'm surrounded by very nice people and I feel safe.



Earlene, 58

Georgia

Vermont Adult Learning - Franklin/Grand Isle Learning Center

I couldn't read until a few years ago. Now, I love to read, I read all the time. I can borrow books from all the libraries---Fairfax, Milton, Essex, Colchester and Georgia. My favorite is Georgia. The librarian knows me and she's so nice.

I left school when I was sixteen and just started working. Now, I can read a newspaper, fill out a job application, read directions for a recipe and pay my bills on my own. VAL teachers are wonderful and so patient. They really helped me a lot!

(Note: Earlene progressed from Adult Basic Education to the High School Completion Program)



Sarah, 27

Brattleboro (Windham County)

Owner, [Sarah Blake Designs, LLC](#)

Vermont Adult Learning - Windham County Learning Center

I worried that the unconventional route was a negative, not a positive. I worked with Cindy Holden at VAL and she really understood me as a student. Leaving Brattleboro Union High School allowed me to decide what I wanted to learn. Art, music and voice lessons became part of my educational plan. At 16, I was allowed to take college classes at the Community College of Vermont so I started earning college credits as I was completing my high school diploma. I was allowed to dive right into the adult world and that worked well for me.

VAL allowed me to take the reins of my education, my life and my experience. I had no idea what to do. People at VAL helped me embrace that uncertainty and explore. I appreciated the autonomy. Education gives young people the tools to **figure out** who they want to become.

We are seeing a bizarre phase of people not working. Local industries are dying out. The trades are seeing a real shortage of young people. I find this to be a great example of how our educational systems can improve; it's an opportunity for us to notice areas for potential skill building, and exposure to more areas of the workforce---not just your average planning for college. There are endless possible careers, and high school should be the place we get to explore them all. Luckily, for me, I got to experience this through VAL. A more autonomous, hands-on learning experience allowed me to be unconventional and self-employed by age twenty-five and it changed my life.