

Commencement
June 3, 2017

Please be seated.

Good afternoon. It is a pleasure to welcome you to the Community College of Vermont's 2017 commencement ceremony. I am Joyce Judy, president of CCV, and I have the distinct honor of greeting you today to celebrate our 2017 graduates.

It is a privilege to be joined on the platform by Vermont's Governor Phil Scott; today's keynote speaker, Eben Bayer; the Vermont State Colleges Chancellor Jeb Spaulding, and Vermont State Colleges Board of Trustees members Church Hindes, Linda Milne, Michael Pieciack, and Aly Richards.

Also joining me on the platform are this year's community service award recipients, Michele and Peter Asch of Twincraft Skincare; the Class of 2017's student speaker Levi Costa; Student Resource Advisor Billi Dunham; and Academic Dean Debby Stewart.

I would also like to acknowledge the state senators and representatives from districts throughout Vermont who are joining us in the audience. Thank you for being here to celebrate CCV's Class of 2017.

Graduates, as you entered the field house this afternoon, you were greeted by members of our faculty. Your instructors, who were such an essential part of your CCV experience, join the faculty line at graduation to recognize your achievement.

In the audience to my left are the many advisors and other staff members who have encouraged you and guided you throughout your time at CCV. Will all faculty and staff members please stand? I ask the graduates to join me in recognizing and thanking them.

I would like to extend a special thanks to all of the CCV staff, as well as the staff here at Norwich University, who organized this event. Today is the culmination of many months of hard work, and we appreciate your efforts.

Graduates, today marks a significant milestone. You have earned a degree from the Community College of Vermont, and I am proud to stand here and be the first to congratulate you on that accomplishment.

This ceremony is a rite of passage. I encourage you to take time to reflect on the hard work that got you here, and to celebrate this moment. I also want to emphasize that this is not an ending. Though you have finished your time at CCV, I hope that your drive to succeed has yet to run its course.

I know from speaking with many of you that the decision to come to CCV was not made easily or lightly. The choice you made to walk through our doors took courage. This is especially true for one of our youngest graduates. Throughout her life, this student had been a victim of criticism and abuse. As a young girl, she dreamed of someday going to law school, but that dream was buried by people who told her she would never succeed. Today, she has a job with the State's Attorney in Rutland, and plans to pursue a bachelor's degree in criminal justice at Castleton University.

Many of you came to CCV because you wanted something different, and were seeking a better future. You committed to your goal of earning a college degree, and you stuck with it. I know that all of you faced obstacles on your way to this day, and that you found ways to overcome them. You have the ability to roll up your sleeves and dive into your work. What's more, you have the desire to keep going.

This work ethic is a quality I hold dear. I grew up on my family's dairy farm, and as many of you know, this is a life that requires rolling up your sleeves every day of the week. It is a life that requires persistence. I am grateful to have been brought up in this tradition, because it has instilled in me the understanding that good, meaningful work is never finished. Today, I see the same persistence in all of you. Creating a better future will require you to keep asking, keep trying, and keep learning.

Graduates, you are here today from all thirteen of our academic centers and from all fourteen counties of this state. You represent 11 other states across the country, and 10 countries of the world. You also span generations. Our two youngest graduates today are 17, and our oldest graduate is 70.

Today is the first time you have all been together in the same place, but you have all shared common experiences during your time at CCV. As new students, you attended orientation, where you were introduced to the College; you have taken a Dimensions class, which provided you with tools and concepts that you utilized throughout your studies; and you've taken a Seminar in Educational Inquiry, where you applied critical thinking to complex issues.

In some cases you learned from others who were half, or twice, your own age; maybe you studied alongside classmates from other countries; or worked with someone whose career or experience you admired.

Some of you are the first in your family to graduate from college. For one of our first-generation students, college was a lifelong dream that was sidelined because of a relentless battle with drug addiction and mental illness. After four years here, this student says CCV feels like home. Today she is graduating with a degree in liberal studies and has received a scholarship to attend a bachelor's program in meteorology at the University of Oklahoma.

This student is not alone in experiencing the transformative power of a CCV education. I would like to ask all of our first-generation graduates to stand at this time and be recognized. Some of you have come to CCV from other countries. Many of our New American graduates came to Vermont in search of greater opportunity, and I am proud that CCV is now a part of their stories.

One of our New American graduates immigrated to New York with her family from central Africa in 2002. She is the survivor of an abusive marriage, which she left in search of a fresh start for herself and her son. This graduate found her way to CCV, where she excelled. She is currently working as a phlebotomist at the UVM Medical Center, and hopes to go on to nursing or medical school.

I would like to ask all New Americans who are graduating today to stand and be recognized. Some of you have spent time in the military, or are still actively serving your country.

For one of our military graduates, school was never easy. After dropping out of the ninth grade, he struggled to find a clear direction in life. Eventually he decided to follow in his father's footsteps and join the military. Today, this student is coming up on eight years of service as a medic with the

Vermont Army National Guard. After applying incredible determination and passion to his work at CCV, he proudly earns his associate degree in liberal studies. He will join the nursing program at Castleton University this fall.

Those of you who are veterans or active members of the military, we are proud of what you have accomplished today, and we thank you for your service to this country. Few of us can imagine the ways in which your lives have been impacted by your experiences, and we offer our deepest gratitude for your bravery, your integrity, and your commitment. I would like to ask all of our veteran and military graduates to stand at this time and be recognized. Thank you for your service.

Graduates, we pause today to recognize your hard work and to celebrate this special moment. I am proud of you, and I congratulate you. It is my hope that you will go forward with confidence, and that you will continue to work tirelessly in pursuit of your dreams. Congratulations!

At this time, I would like to invite the Governor of the State of Vermont, Phil Scott, to the podium to greet and congratulate the Class of 2017. Governor Scott.

At CCV, we take great pride in encouraging and celebrating community service. At commencement, we honor individuals who have given their time and energy in service to others.

I would like to invite Michele and Peter Asch to join me at the podium.

The Community Service Award is presented each year in recognition of sustained and profound service to our state. This year it is my distinct privilege to recognize Michele and Peter Asch.

Together with Peter's brother, the Asches own and operate Twincraft Skincare, a growing Vermont manufacturer. Twincraft was founded by Peter's father and uncle in 1972. Today, Peter serves as President and Michele as Vice President of Leadership and Organizational Development. Peter also serves on the boards of Intervale and the ACLU, and Michele serves on the board of Special Olympics Vermont.

At Twincraft, the Asches have made significant contributions to workforce development and education. They strive to provide well-paying jobs with opportunities for personal growth. They believe in second chances, and feel that anyone who is willing to work hard deserves the opportunity to succeed. In addition, they work with community organizations to employ those in recovery or with special needs. Their commitment to helping Vermonters work toward a better life is an inspiration.

Michele and Peter, on behalf of the CCV community, please accept our sincere thanks for the many ways you work to improve the quality of life in our state.

CCV faculty members are committed to serving their communities, embedding service learning opportunities in their classes, and often inspiring a desire for community engagement in their students. This year we present the Faculty Community Service Award to Carol Tashie.

Carol Tashie has been an active leader in the Rutland community since moving to that area over a decade ago. In addition to teaching classes at CCV, she owns and operates an organic vegetable farm and has been involved in several area organizations and initiatives, including the Central Vermont Peace and Justice Center, the Rutland Area Farm and Food Link, the local food co-op, and

Sustainable Rutland. Most recently, she played an integral role in the founding of Rutland Welcomes, a volunteer effort to support refugee resettlement.

As an instructor, Carol encourages service learning at every opportunity. She is an inspiration to her peers, her students, and her community, and we thank her for her service. Congratulations to her on receiving this award.

Unfortunately, Carol was not able to be here today.

Many CCV students are active leaders in their academic centers and in their communities, and dedicate a great deal of their time and effort to engaging and supporting the people around them.

This year, we are very pleased to present the student service awards to Hunter Knox and Andrea Otto. Will Hunter and Andrea please join me on the platform?

Hunter Knox studied at our Upper Valley academic center, and graduates today with a degree in environmental science. Hunter has been an avid outdoorsman for most of his life. He has a deep love for Vermont and feels strongly about young people staying here to work and live. Throughout his time at CCV, he has been a leader and a role model. He participated in outreach with local schools and served on student panels, where he shared his own story and experiences. He has been a member of the Community of Student Representatives, a work-study student, and an orientation leader, and he was a recipient of CCV's 2016 Leadership Scholarship. He plans to carry his affection for Vermont's forests and waterways into his bachelor's degree program in natural resources.

Andrea Otto studied at our St. Johnsbury academic center, and has been devoted to that community since starting out at CCV. She served as a Job Hunt Helper at St. Johnsbury's public library, helping local patrons look for job opportunities and training. She was a member of the Community of Student Representatives, and she was one of the first students to participate in CCV's Friday morning webinar series, where she and a peer discussed solutions to the high cost of textbooks. Andrea is a talented artist, and has shared her work at the St. Johnsbury academic center to promote classes and events.

Congratulations to Hunter and Andrea. We wish you the best of luck.

Graduates, today you become CCV alumni. In that role, you will always be members of the CCV family. With generous support from past graduates, every year we award the alumni scholarship to graduates who plan to continue their education at a four-year college.

This year, we are proud to award the alumni scholarship to Alicia Batchelder, Andrea Otto, and Cara Tomasini. Will Alicia, Andrea, and Cara please join me on the platform?

Alicia Batchelder studied at our Montpelier academic center, and is earning a degree in business. She will be pursuing a bachelor's degree in accounting at Lyndon State College, and hopes to become a Certified Public Accountant.

Andrea Otto graduates with a degree in visual arts and plans to continue on to a bachelor's degree in art education at either Johnson State College or the University of Vermont.

Cara Tomasini attended our Rutland academic center and graduates today with a degree in human

services. She plans to continue her studies at Castleton University, where she will pursue a degree in social work.

Congratulations to Alicia, Andrea, and Cara on receiving the 2017 Alumni Scholarships.

Now, graduates, you will hear from one of your own. The Student Speaker for the Class of 2017 is Levi Costa, from CCV's Morrisville academic center. Here to introduce Levi is Student Resource Advisor Billi Dunham.

At this time, I am pleased to introduce our Keynote Speaker, Eben Bayer.

Eben Bayer grew up working on his family's farm in central Vermont. He graduated from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute with degrees in Mechanical Engineering and Innovation and Design. He is co-founder of Ecovative, which uses mushroom-based materials to create safe, alternative products for packaging and building.

Eben has shared his work and ideas at events around the world, including at TED conferences, the United Nations Climate Summit, and the World Economic Forum. We are pleased to have Eben, an innovative global thinker who remains loyal to the values of his native Vermont, here today. We are delighted that he was able to join us to address the CCV class of 2017. Eben.

2017 marks the second year of the CCV chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, a national honor society for community college students who demonstrate academic integrity and excellence. You likely noticed when these students entered the field house that they are wearing yellow stoles, which symbolize their membership in PTK. Will all graduating members of Phi Theta Kappa stand at this time to be recognized?

It is now time to turn our attention to the awarding of degrees. I congratulate each of you for the recognition you earn today, as do the many others who have helped you along the way to this moment. I ask the families, friends, and supporters of our graduates to rise. Graduates, please thank your family and friends for their support.

CCV has a long-standing tradition that you will share in today. As you leave the platform after receiving your diplomas, CCV staff members will present you with a red carnation. This flower is a symbol of the many people in your lives who have helped you reach this day.

Now, CCV Academic Dean Debby Stewart will present the class of 2017.

Debby:

"President Judy, it is my pleasure to present the CCV graduating class of 2017—all of whom have successfully completed the requirements for the Associate Degree or the Associate in Applied Science Degree."

By the authority vested in the Community College of Vermont by the Board of Trustees of the Vermont State Colleges, I confer upon you, the class of 2017, the Associate Degree.

Graduates, as you hear the name of your CCV academic center announced, please stand as a group and proceed to this end of the stage, then proceed individually across the platform to receive your degree.

Will the graduates from BENNINGTON please stand and come to the stage...

[Janette continues to read names from the lectern]

Will the graduates from [blank] please stand and come to the stage:

_Bennington

_Brattleboro

_Middlebury

_Montpelier

_Morrisville

_Newport

_The Center for Online Learning

_Rutland

_Springfield

_St. Albans

_St. Johnsbury

_Upper Valley

_Winooski

Now, graduates, if you would please direct your attention to the front of the main aisle. Levi, please lead your class in moving their tassels.

Once again, congratulations to the class of 2017. We are very proud of you. We send you off with newly conferred degrees, trusting that you will continue to strengthen and enrich your communities.

The group on the platform will lead the graduates out. I ask the audience to remain seated until the graduates have completed their recessional. Thank you.