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23 Earn High School Diplomas Through Vernon Regional Adult Based Education Program

VRABE Graduates Overcome Obstacles as They Achieve

VERNON, Conn. – Thursday night 23 men and women received their high school diplomas, an achievement that for some of them once seemed unattainable. But through commitment, hard work, perseverance, and support and encouragement from family and teachers and administrators in the Vernon Regional Adult Based Education program, they succeeded.



Members of the VRABE High School Diploma Class of 2024 turn the tassels.

A large crowd at Rockville High School cheered the graduates, acknowledging that their achievement was all the more special because most had fulltime jobs and family obligations to juggle along with their studies.

Vernon Regional Adult Based Education Regional Director Melissa Iles called the graduation ceremony “a

The Vernon Public Schools, in partnership with family and community, is committed to provide a quality education, with high expectations, in a safe environment where all students become independent learners and productive contributors to society.

celebration of resilience, perseverance and achievement.”

The graduates “exhibited incredible dedication and determination, overcoming numerous challenges and obstacles” to earn their diplomas, she said. “They embraced opportunities for growth and self-improvement, proving that with hard work and determination any goal can be achieved.”

Vernon Superintendent of Schools Dr. Joseph P. Macary said the VRABE program is something the Vernon Public Schools is proud to sponsor. It serves people from 14 towns and offers high school diploma programs, English as a second language classes, citizenship classes and a variety of other courses.

“In Vernon, our vision of the graduate is that they become critical thinkers, collaborators, communicators, resilient individuals and responsible citizens,” Dr. Macary said. “When I think of a resilient individual I think about perseverance, I think about dedication, commitment to excellence and really becoming a lifelong learner, and these individuals have successfully done that.”

Vernon Mayor Dan Champagne told the graduates that the VRABE graduation is one of his favorite events of the year because the graduates have faced and overcome a variety of challenges and should be celebrated.

“What a great day,” he said. “I know the students sitting up here took a different route. You worked very hard to get to this day.”

Marcy Reed, a consultant with the state Department of Education, said for some taking that first step to return to school, to resolve to earn a high school diploma can be difficult.

“You did it. You carried it through,” Reed said. “Education is the key. Never turn away from a challenge and from the chance to advance yourself, learning something new and continuing your journey. It’s worth it and don’t stop here.”

A woman who dropped out of school at age 15, then earned her diploma last year through VRABE told graduates that completing her education with assistance and guidance from VRABE teachers changed her life.

Claire Santacroce said she was bullied in high school and that she was mentally unable to continue. She dropped out and spent two years sulking in her bedroom and thinking she was a failure.

When her grandfather died without seeing her graduate high school, she resolved to get her diploma. She learned about VRABE and enrolled so that her grandmother would see her graduate.

A VRABE teacher had told her, “There is no time limit to success.”

This August she is headed off to college and will be part of her school’s honors program.

“Never in a million years did 15 year old me think now 20 year old me would have graduated high school let alone go to college and become an honors student,” Santacroce said. “Thank you to VRABE ... for helping me prove to myself I’m worthy of success in my life and that there is no time limit.”

Although 23 people collected their diplomas Thursday, this year 51 people earned their diplomas through VRABE. For more information about VRABE and its programs, please visit www.vrabe.com.

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