

A Classic Comeback

Connor Williams – Class of 2021

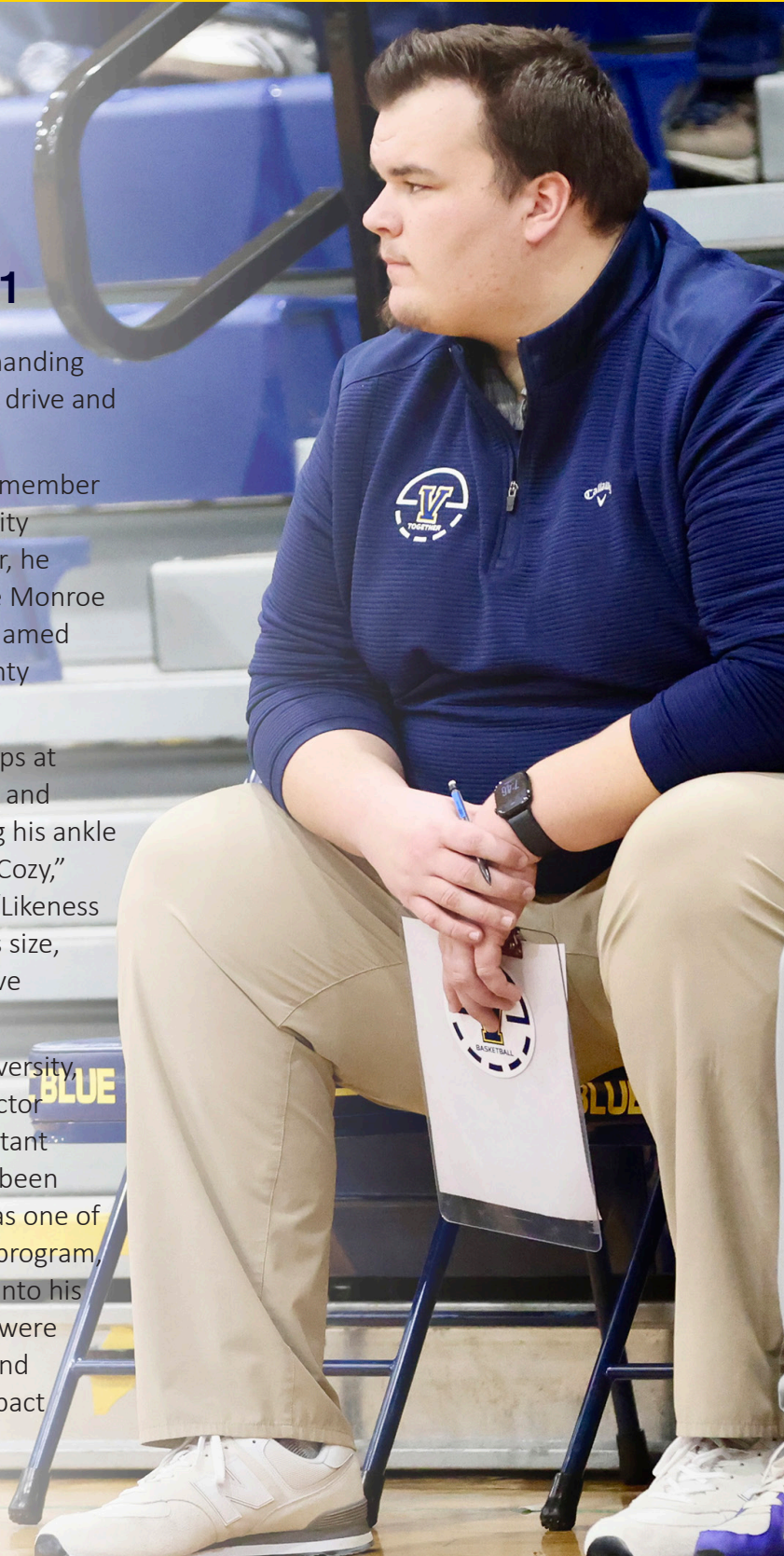
Seven-foot-tall Connor Williams is known for his commanding size but for those who really know him, his dedication, drive and determination dominate his physical presence.

During his high school years, Connor was a three-year member of the Varsity Football program and played on the Varsity Basketball team for four seasons. As a basketball player, he was named All-Greater Rochester twice, and voted the Monroe County Player of the Year in 2021. In football, he was named Second-Team All-League and part of two Monroe County Division I League Championships.

After graduating from VCS in 2021, Connor played hoops at St. John Fisher University where he went viral on ESPN and social media for making a magnificent pass after rolling his ankle in a game against University of Buffalo. Known as “Big Cozy,” Connor’s viral moment led to numerous Name/Image/Likeness (NIL) deals and widespread recognition, not just for his size, but also for his unexpected smooth skills and impressive three-point shooting.

This past fall, after graduating from St. John Fisher University, Connor came back to where it all began, joining the Victor Blue Devils Varsity Basketball team as a volunteer assistant coach. Connor’s former coach, David Vistocco said it’s been wonderful having Connor back in the gym. “Connor was one of the smartest basketball players we’ve ever had in this program, and he does a great job of translating that knowledge into his coaching. He was a huge piece of the puzzle when we were building our culture and community a few years ago, and now we are lucky to have him continue to make an impact as a coach,” Vistocco said.

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#OnceABlueDevilAlwaysABlueDevil

Alumni Update

A Classic Comeback

(continued from front cover)



A Q&A with Connor Williams...

What did you do after graduating from VCS?

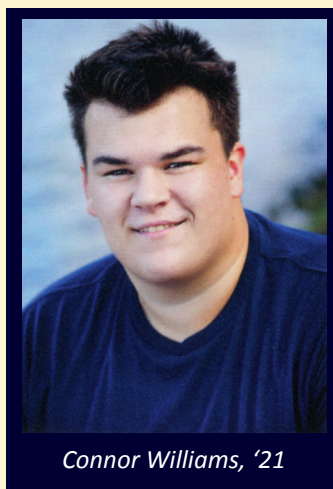
After graduating, I attended St. John Fisher University majoring in cybersecurity as well as being a member of the men's basketball team. After graduating with my degree in cybersecurity I started my job with the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children as a Cyber Tipline Analyst where we do a lot of very important work!

What is it like to be back at VCS as an assistant coach?

It is great to be back at VCS alongside Tyler Roberts and the rest of the coaches and giving back to a program that shaped me on and off the floor in such a big way. My experience in the basketball program is what drew me back and specifically coach Roberts and Coach Vistocco who were tremendous leaders to me and always kept in touch with me after my career here along with my love for basketball and passing those same experiences along to the next generation.

What teachers and coaches influenced you the most?

Thinking back to my time at VCS I think more about the people that meant the most to me and those people include Coach Roberts, Coach Vistocco, Coach Reddout, Coach Condon, Mr. Purdie, Mr. Cutaia, and



Connor Williams, '21

Mrs. Gilbert Newton. All these people were excellent teachers and mentors to look up to during my time there and led me to where I am today.

How did VCS prepare you for life after high school?

My education at VCS prepared me for everything after school as well as being a successful student athlete in college. Learning how to manage my time between academics and sports is a great tool to learn time management. Another

thing would be working with people and relationships which could be the most important of them all because relationships get you a long way.

What advice would you give to today's VCS graduates?

My advice to VCS graduates today would be to enjoy the people along the way. To me the people are what make things great and no matter what good or bad things may happen in life the people you're with in those times are what you'll remember most. Some of my best friends are from my time at VCS and my time at St. John Fisher and those people are more important to me than most everything else good or bad that happened over those years regarding school, sports, or general life events.

Visual & Performing Arts Hall of Fame Recipient Honored

Victor alumna Caelin Kordziel (Class of 2003) was inducted into the VCS Visual & Performing Arts Hall of Fame on Thursday, October 16, 2025 at the Board of Education meeting.

Through the years, Kordziel has built a thriving music program at Romulus Central School that includes teaching, directing musicals, playing in musical pits, and advocating for music opportunities through her school's Educational Foundation. She also takes time to support numerous music students outside of her district.

Caelin returned to VCS five years ago as the Visual Caption Head of the Victor Marching Blue Devils. In that time, this former Victor Marching Blue Devil has worked collaboratively with hundreds of students, staff, and community members to help continue the legacy of the VMBD as an organization with excellence in performing on and off the field.

Rachel Hucko, fellow VCS classmate, teaching colleague and nominator said music teachers don't teach music so their students become famous musicians, but to inspire the love for music and to teach skills like persistence, risk-taking, dedication, practice, and collaboration, which transfer to all areas of life.



Caelin (Dendievel) Kordziel, '03



Visual & Performing Arts HALL OF FAME

**Do you know a VCS alumnus
who has made a significant
contribution to the arts?**

*The Visual and Performing Arts Hall of Fame honors
such individuals. Please visit our website for more
information and to fill out the nomination form.*



"Caelin is the epitome of that music student and that music teacher. She is loved and respected by the whole student body of Romulus Central Schools as evidenced by not only a Yearbook Dedication in 2024 but also being voted the Most Influential Teacher for the 2023-2024 school year."

— Rachel Hucko

SAVE THE DATE!
Victor Suzuki
60th Reunion
June 13, 2026

More information on back cover



Alumni Update

Retired 3-Star General Named 2025 Graduate of Distinction

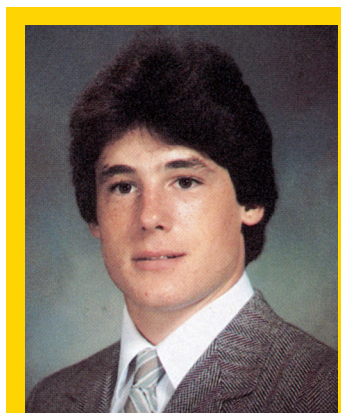
Lieutenant General (ret) Kirk S. Pierce (Class of 1984) was inducted into the prestigious Victor Central Schools Graduates of Distinction program at the November 13th VCS Board of Education meeting. Prior to his induction, he spent the afternoon meeting with students in the high school.



Upon graduating from the University of Notre Dame with a B.S. in Aerospace Engineering in 1988, Kirk Pierce dedicated decades to serving his country in the U.S. Air Force and Air National Guard. Beginning his distinguished career as a fighter pilot, he steadily rose through the ranks. His extensive service took him across the United States and overseas, with tours in South Korea, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq, as well as key postings at Andrews Air Force Base (AFB) and the Pentagon.

Kirk retired in April 2023 as a highly decorated three-star general, having served in multiple combat situations. He furthered his military education by earning an M.S. in National Security Strategy from the National War College.

Today, Kirk continues to demonstrate leadership in the civilian sector. He is an international airline pilot with United Airlines and manages his own consulting business, RivaONE LLC. He also lends his expertise as a National Security Advisory Board Member for Skydio,



Kirk S. Pierce, '84

a drone manufacturer based in California. Kirk and his wife, Christy, currently reside in Colorado Springs, Colorado. They have been married for over 30 years and are proud parents to three grown children.

Pierce's nominator, friend, and former classmate,

Mark Panus (Class of 1984) said that since graduating from VCS, Kirk has embodied a life of extraordinary leadership, scholarship, and service. "In the Air Force, he commanded at every level, serving in operational assignments for Operations Southern Watch, Noble Eagle, Iraqi Freedom, New Dawn, Enduring Freedom, and Allies Welcome. As a private citizen, he has volunteered as a coach in various youth sports and has mentored young adults for many years. As a family man, he is a terrific husband and father, a good son, and a loyal friend. I can think of no one more deserving than Kirk for this VCS alumni honor. He truly is a graduate of distinction," Panus said.



VCS Seeks Distinguished Graduates

Do you know a VCS alumnus who has made a significant contribution to society?

Please visit our website for more information and to fill out the nomination form.



From Pupil to Principal

Jacqueline
(Rayburn) Cash
(Class of 2013)



Jacqueline (Rayburn) Cash, '13



What did you do post VCS?

After graduating from VCS, I studied Childhood Education at SUNY Oswego and graduated in December 2016. That same month, I began my first teaching job as a second-grade teacher in Johnson City, NY. I went on to teach both first and second grade there for eight years.

During that time, I earned my master's degree in Literacy from SUNY Oneonta. Later, I pursued my Advanced Certificate in Educational Leadership at Binghamton University, where I graduated in December 2024. In May 2024, I became an Assistant Principal in Johnson City, and just a couple of months later—in July—I stepped into my current role as a building principal of an elementary school in Binghamton City School District.

What classes/activities and/or teachers at VCS most inspired you?

I was inspired by many of my teachers at VCS. I especially enjoyed the field trips and hands-on learning experiences during my primary and intermediate years. High school was more of a challenge for me, but I had one teacher who really made a difference—Mr. Modleski. He was also my cross country and track & field coach, and he had a huge impact on me. He held us to high expectations but was always there to support and push us in the right direction.

How did your VCS education prepare you for work and life in general?

During my junior and senior years at VCS, I had the opportunity to intern at the Primary School. I was placed in a first-grade classroom, and that experience is what made me fall in love with teaching. It motivated me to work harder in high school so I could pursue a degree in education.

I also appreciated the ability to take college-level courses while still in high school. That head start allowed me to graduate from college early and save money, which was a huge benefit as I began my career.

What advice would you give to VCS graduates today?

Stay passionate. In high school, I discovered a passion for creating opportunities for others and making sure every student feels like they belong and can succeed. That passion has guided every step of my journey and is a big part of why I'm in a leadership role today.

"Find what drives you—and don't let it go. Let it shape your path, even if that path isn't always easy or direct. Passion paired with persistence can take you farther than you imagine."

— Jacqueline Cash

Alumni Update

2025 Athletic Hall of Fame Recipients Honored



(Pictured from left) Yvonne O'Shea, David Condon, Adam Willman '10, Jimmy Wagner '11, Mike Wagner '15, Tommy Wagner '13 (inset right)



On Friday, December 5, the Victor Athletic Hall of Fame (AHOF) committee formally inducted four athletes, one former coach, and one former administrator into the prestigious group. The ceremony, held in the Victor Junior/Senior High Arts Center, focused on documenting the measurable impact of each recipient on the school's athletic history.

The 2025 Inductees



This year's class was notably outstanding, featuring a powerful cohort from the gridiron, wrestling, baseball, and track, as well as two key figures who shaped the program's foundation.

The Athletes: The Wagner Dynasty and a Multi-Sport Star

Athletic Hall of Fame continued

The induction included a remarkable moment as three brothers were honored for their extraordinary careers, alongside another multi-sport standout:



Adam Wilman, '10

Jimmy Wagner, '11

Tommy Wagner, '13

Mike Wagner, '15

- **Adam Willman '10** (Wrestling/Football/Lacrosse): Willman was a true three-sport star, but his performance on the wrestling mats was truly exceptional, defining a new level of achievement for the program. His athletic presence extended to the football field, and he was a contributor to the growing success of Victor's lacrosse team, leaving a lasting legacy for future Victor athletes to follow.
- **Jimmy Wagner '11** (Football/Track and Field): Known for his speed and strength, Jimmy was an integral part of the football team and carried his competitive fire over to track and field, where he set several program records.
- **Tommy Wagner '13** (Football/Baseball): Tommy, who accepted the award with a pre-recorded speech due to professional commitments, was a versatile athlete excelling on both the football field and the baseball diamond, embodying the spirit of Victor's scholar-athletes.
- **Mike Wagner '15** (Football/Baseball): The youngest of the Wagner brothers inducted, Mike continued the family tradition of excellence, becoming a standout player in both football and baseball before moving on to collegiate success.

The Pillars: Coach and Administrator

The committee also recognized two individuals whose leadership and service profoundly influenced the school and its athletic program for decades:



David Condon,
Yvonne O'Shea



- **David Condon** (Former Coach): Coach Condon is celebrated for his commitment to developing not just winning teams, but disciplined and high-character young men and women. His coaching philosophy emphasized preparation, resilience, and teamwork, leaving a lasting legacy in the hearts of his former athletes.
- **Yvonne O'Shea** (Former Victor High School Principal): As Principal, Yvonne O'Shea was a steadfast supporter of Victor athletics, recognizing the critical role sports play in holistic student development. Her administrative guidance ensured the athletic department had the resources and support necessary to thrive.

Athletic Hall of Fame

Victor Central School District is seeking nominations for the Athletic Hall of Fame Program. Any individual can nominate a potential candidate by completing a Hall of Fame nomination application.

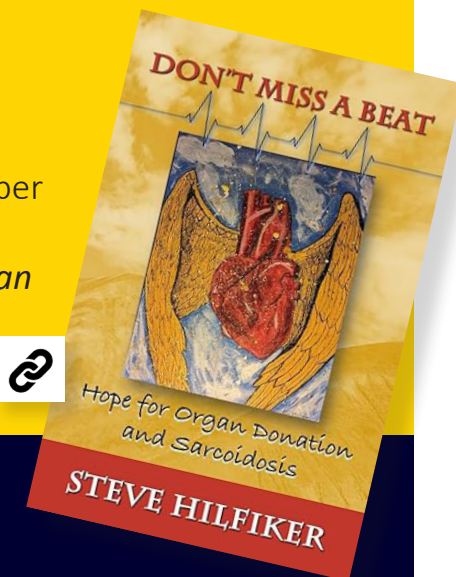


Alumni Update

Steve Hilfiker (VCS Class of 1984) Releases Book Of Hope



Congratulations to Steve Hilfiker, Class of '84. This former CEO, film producer and founder added another career milestone in October with the release of his book, *"Don't Miss a Beat: Hope for Organ Donation and Sarcoidosis"* on Amazon Books.



 [More About FODASA, Steve's foundation](#)

 [Hear more about Steve's life journey in Episode 3 of the VCS Alumni Podcast](#)

About his book, *"Don't Miss a Beat: Hope for Organ Donation and Sarcoidosis"*

When Steve Hilfiker was told his heart was failing, he wasn't just fighting for his life, he was battling a missed diagnosis that nearly cost him everything. What began as a persistent cough spiraled into a near-fatal crisis caused by cardiac sarcoidosis- a rare and often misunderstood disease. But with the gift of a new heart and a second chance, Steve chose to turn his pain into purpose.

This powerful book weaves Steve's personal journey with the voices of other patients, donor families, and medical experts. You'll meet everyday heroes and advocates, uncover the hidden toll of delayed diagnoses, and discover how organ donation and early detection can save lives.

Whether you're a patient, caregiver, medical professional, or simply someone who cares, this book is a heartfelt invitation to join a movement- one that raises awareness, champions medical advancement, and celebrates the resilience of the human spirit. Because awareness isn't just powerful- it's lifesaving.

Steve Hilfiker is a heart transplant survivor and founder of FODASA, a 501c3 non-profit organization. With over 35 years in environmental advocacy and consulting, he brings both personal and professional insight to the mission. After surviving cardiac sarcoidosis, Steve now speaks nationwide to raise awareness for rare diseases, early detection, and organ donation.

"I'm Steve. In 2020, I nearly died from cardiac sarcoidosis. My heart failed, I was on life support and was blessed with a heart transplant at my exact moment of need. Just 90 days after that transplant, I was able to climb one of the highest mountains in the southeastern U.S. Since then, I've dedicated my life to alerting people to a little-known killer disease — and to honoring Daniel, my donor, along with hundreds of others like him. Be encouraged by the messages of hope we share."

— Steve Hilfiker, FODASA Founder
(Courtesy of FODASA website)

A Q&A with Steve Hilfiker

What did you do after graduating from VCS in 1984?

After four fun-filled years in Geneseo and a master's degree from University of Florida, I have enjoyed my career in the environmental remediation business.

After my heart transplant in 2020, I became an advocate for Hope and Health. We have produced four films that have screened at film festivals throughout the world. I am pursuing a theology degree to enhance our work. Our foundation is now a thriving mission (FODASA.ORG).

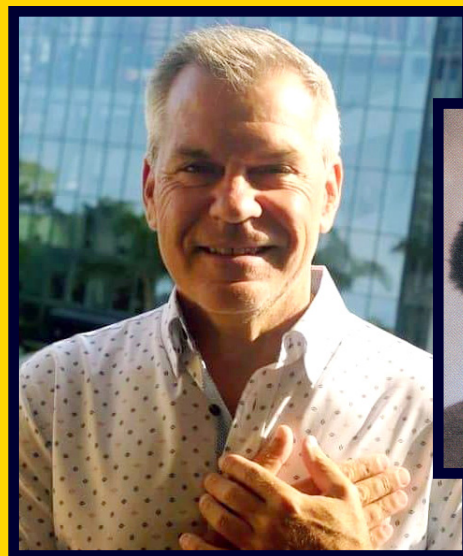
I have four wonderful children and live in Florida with my wonderful wife Kim. The foundation was blessed with an RV and we travel the country speaking at hospitals and churches, providing messages of Hope.

What classes/activities and/or teachers at VCS most inspired you?

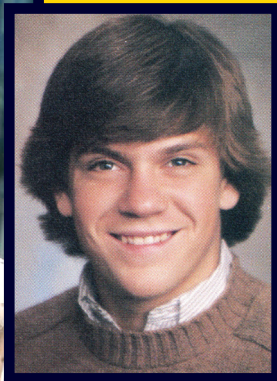
Mr. Potter and Mr. Smith were great teachers and soccer coaches. They treated us like friends. Very cool...

My best memories include Riccio's, Skate Place, Bristol Mountain ski club, Powder Mill Park, Fireman Carnivals, the quarry, and great friends with forever memories.

VCS is unique the way all schools are on one campus. I believe that is a strong social strength that binds the community and everyone who went to school there.



Steve Hilfiker
at Cannes



Steve Hilfiker, '84

How did your VCS education prepare you for work and life in general?

The education was great. It prepared me to succeed at graduate school and in business. And the social experiences of growing up in Victor with tremendous friends enhanced the skills necessary to succeed in life.

What advice would you give to VCS graduates today?

Find your passion and make it your vocation. Get involved in community and industry associations to share your voice. Communicate directly in a spirit of collaboration with those who can assist you to achieve your goals. Despite the pace and seemingly increasing chaos in the world, try to slow down and enjoy the ride. Life is a journey, not a destination.

Hope and faith are actions that result in peace and joy under the umbrella of love. Give and receive grace. Life is too short to not love one another.



Scenes from Victor Central Schools Educational Foundation's 2025 Devil Dash this past September. Whether you ran, walked, or supported this event another way, your participation benefits VCS students and staff all year long by providing resources to expand existing activities and create new educational opportunities.



Alumni Update

Laura Turner ('87) Published in "A Christmastime Anthology"

This past fall, Laura Turner, a freelance journalist and author, had her story, *"A Holiday Homecoming"* published in *"Home for the Holidays: A Christmastime Anthology"* by Nicole Frail.

"Home for the Holidays: A Christmastime Anthology" is a collection of twelve short stories that explores the many ways we find our way back to each other, to ourselves, and to the places that feel like home. Whether through a grandmother's treasured Christmas Eve memory, a soldier's bittersweet homecoming, or simply strangers crossing paths in snow-covered towns, each tale captures the warmth and quiet magic of belonging during the holiday season."

"Home for the Holidays: A Christmastime Anthology," which includes *"A Holiday Homecoming"* by Laura Turner is available in paperback and eBook formats on Amazon Books.



A Q&A with Laura Turner

What did you do after you graduated from VCS in 1987?

I am an honorary graduate of Nazareth University's English Literature program. I worked for my family's business, Turner Automotive, as a bookkeeper and also worked as a freelance health journalist. Later, I began writing short stories and longer book-length romantic fiction.

What classes/activities and/or teachers at VCS most inspired you?

Always and forever, I will be inspired by my English classes with Tim Smith.

How did your VCS education prepare you for work and life in general?

My education at VCS gave me important critical thinking skills. The value of these skills, culled from my classes from English to Earth Science, have allowed me to adapt to a variety of working environments and have given me important communication skills when

working with the public both in sales, as well as with editors and social media as it pertains to my writing.

What advice would you give to VCS graduates today?

Search your heart and follow your passions. You will be spending a lot of time working, so it's important to focus on doing something you love and that gives you energy. Be aware of the things that give you energy, a wise career counselor once told me.

Can you tell me more about your Christmas story?

This story, *"A Holiday Homecoming,"* part of this holiday anthology, is a military romance and was inspired by a family member who is deployed in Kuwait. I wanted to showcase the love and sacrifice of military families, especially during the holidays.



Laura Turner, '87

Keith Partington, Class of 1979, releases new book on Amazon!

This past October, Keith Partington launched his second book on Amazon.

Workforce Resolve is the sequel to Partington's first book, *Fraternal Resolve*; however, it can be read as a stand-alone. Partington said he was especially proud to launch this book during National Disability Employment Awareness Month because it is an inclusive workplace story.



Workforce Resolve Synopsis

Highly skilled computer science grad Trey Adams lands her dream job at global tech leader ISC in Boston as the first employee in its CEO-sponsored "neurodiversity at work" program. Trey finds herself under the command of toxic manager Bart Sherman, who is hell-bent on firing Trey's assigned sales mentor, Andrew Clooney. Andrew's personal finance and mental health struggles intensify as Bart tightens his termination grip. As Trey's talent shines, Bart, biased by her neurological differences, places Andrew and Trey in a competitive, nearly unwinnable customer pursuit, forming a trapdoor to ruin both careers at ISC.

To purchase book

There are currently three editions of *Workforce Resolve* available on Amazon, including paperback, Kindle, and audiobook. A large print edition is available directly through Partington.

"If you read either title in my Resolve Series, I'd love to hear your thoughts — and if the story resonates, please consider sharing it. Goodreads and Amazon reviews are super helpful, so thank you for your consideration," Partington said.

Special Thank You

We would like to extend a special thank you to **Keith Partington**, Class of 1979, for his ongoing work in bringing alumni stories to life. Keith's unique perspective and lifelong passion for the Victor community are what make this newsletter possible.

Have a Story to Tell? We love hearing what our alumni are up to. If you have a story idea or an update to share, please reach out to us at contact@victorschools.org.

Stay Connected The Victor Alumni Newsletter is published twice a year (Summer and Winter) and delivered digitally to our alumni community. Don't miss an issue! **Subscribe today!** 

60th Suzuki Celebration Planned

Alumni Invited to Join the Orchestra!

On Saturday, June 13th at 11:00 a.m., the VCS Music Department will celebrate 60 years of Suzuki in our schools with a special concert in the Junior/Senior High Arts Center. All alumni are encouraged to dust off their instruments and join in! Music will be sent out before the event and a formal invitation will be released in April. All participants will be invited to enjoy lunch on campus following the concert.

Stay tuned!

More details are coming soon – but if you have questions, please reach out to Gretchen Judge at judgeg@victorschools.org.



GRADUATION

VCS Class of 2026

Monday, June 22

7:30 PM

ESL Ballpark

1 Morrie Silver Way
Rochester, NY



Class of 1975 50 Year Reunion

Then



"I was one of five seniors on the first Victor girls swim team. This year, at our 50th HS reunion, we all reunited for the first time. We recreated the photo from our yearbook here."
–Joy Underhill

Now



STAY CONNECTED

Our VCS Alumni Association has active FB and LinkedIn groups. Join them to share memories, participate in discussions, and share life updates!



The VCS Alumni Association



Victor Central School
Alumni and Staff

Class of 1995 30 Year Reunion



SAVE THE DATE

129TH ALUMNI BANQUET

Sunday, June
14th, 2026 at
Ravenwood
Golf Course