

# KVCC HAPPENINGS

*Kennebec Valley Community College*

Summer 2025 | Vol. 1

KVCC.ME.EDU



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# Dear Friends, Supporters, and Members of Our Community,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the first edition of our community college newsletter. As president of KVCC, I am honored to introduce this new publication, which will serve as a window into the heart of our college,

highlighting the stories, achievements, and aspirations that define who we are.

This newsletter is a celebration of our shared commitment to accessible, high-quality education. It reflects the vital role that our college plays in the region, and the extraordinary contributions made by our students, faculty, staff, alumni, and, most importantly, by you—our valued donors, partners, and friends.

At KVCC, we are dedicated to creating opportunities and removing barriers. Whether it's a first-generation student pursuing a dream, a young high school student searching for their next step, a veteran returning to civilian life, or an adult learner changing careers, each story on our campus is unique and inspiring. Your support helps make these journeys possible.

The publication will highlight:

- **Student Success Stories** – showcasing the resilience and determination of our learners
- **Faculty Highlights** – introducing the educators who innovate and inspire every day
- **Campus Initiatives** – updating you on exciting projects, partnerships, and improvement.
- **Community Impact** – reflecting the difference we make together, both locally and beyond

We invite you to stay connected, engage with our work, and take pride in what we accomplish together.

Welcome to the journey. We're so glad to have you with us.

Warmest regards,

Karen Normandin  
President

KVCC Senior Leadership, back row from left to right: Russell Begin, Dean of Finance & Administration; Karen Normandin, President; Jennifer Casey, Executive Director of KVCC Foundation and Director of Development; CJ McKenna, Dean of Student Affairs and Enrollment; front row from left to right: Elizabeth Fortin, Dean of Workforce Training and Professional Development; Brianne Pushor, Dean of Facilities and Operations; Kathryn Englehart, Dean of Academic Affairs and Vice President; Jody Leary, Executive Assistant to the President



# SPOTLIGHT ON TRADES:

## KVCC Responds to Growing Demand for Skilled Workers

Across the country, community colleges are experiencing a surge in enrollment in trades and technical programs—and Kennebec Valley Community College (KVCC) is no exception. Driven by industry demand, economic shifts, and a renewed appreciation for hands-on careers, students are increasingly choosing the trades as a smart, affordable path to a strong future.

At KVCC, programs in Electrical, Plumbing & Heating, Electrical Lineworker Technology, Applied Electronics, Welding, and Precision Machining offer both associate degrees and one-year certificates. These programs equip students with the real-world skills that employers are actively seeking. Enrollment has remained consistently strong for over a decade, with growing waitlists due to limited capacity in these highly specialized, equipment-intensive programs.

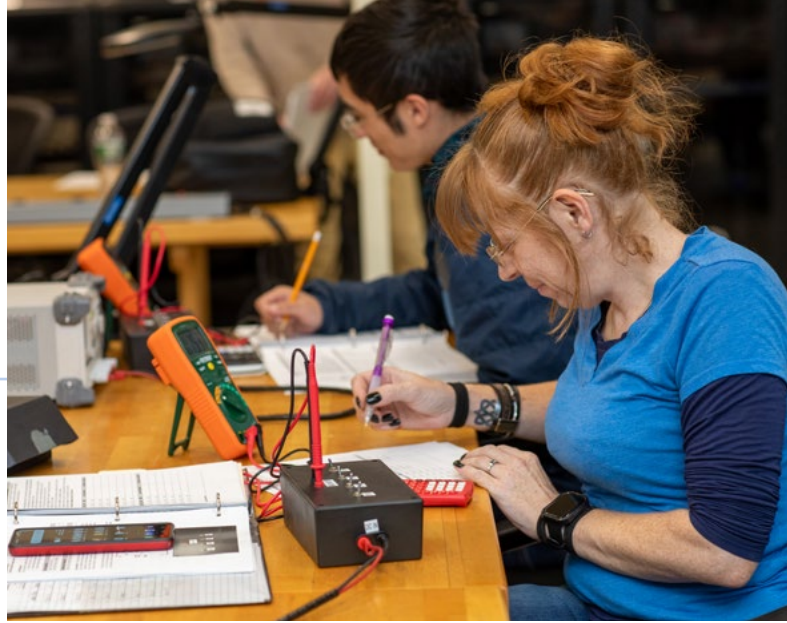
“In some programs, we only have space for forty students, while seventy more are placed on a waitlist,” says Teresa Smith, Director of Enrollment at KVCC. “We’ve always had waitlists, but the numbers have nearly doubled over the past few years. Many students stay on for a program opening, while others get ahead by starting general education courses early.”

### Why Trades Are Trending:

- **Affordability** – Lower tuition and less debt compared to four-year degrees
- **Job Readiness** – Graduates often step directly into well-paying, high-demand careers
- **Hands-On Careers** – Perfect for students who thrive in practical, experiential settings

As skilled tradespeople retire in record numbers, filling these vital roles has become urgent. From manufacturers to homeowners, the demand for qualified workers has outpaced supply. We’ve all heard the stories: neighbors who can’t find a plumber, a six-week wait for HVAC repairs, or local manufacturers struggling to hire experienced welders and electricians.

Many young people are rethinking traditional paths to success. Is it worth borrowing \$100,000 for a bachelor’s degree? How long will it take to repay that debt? Are there better, faster ways to build a meaningful career? For many, the answer is yes.



According to an April 2024 *Wall Street Journal* article titled “How Gen Z Is Becoming the Toolbelt Generation,” today’s students want tangible, meaningful, and essential careers to the nation’s infrastructure. Gen Z isn’t drawn to desk jobs—they want to move, repair, and create. And thanks to technological advances, today’s trades careers feature innovative tools, enhanced safety, and excellent compensation.

The Maine Department of Labor’s 2024 Job Outlook report identifies several “high-wage, in-demand jobs” accessible through KVCC’s short-term certificate and two-year programs, and highlights starting salaries for each:

- **Welding** – Starting salary: \$45,140
- **Electrical Technology** – Starting salary: \$56,170
- **Electrical Lineworker Technology** – Starting salary: \$56,150

KVCC is also innovating to reach students even earlier. Under the leadership of Kathy Englehart, Dean of Academic Affairs, the college has launched standout dual enrollment initiatives with local high schools. Over the past five years, students—especially in Welding—have earned KVCC credits while completing their high school diplomas. Graduating with both a high school credential and a college certificate, these students are workforce-ready and ahead of the curve.

To ensure its programs align with real-world demands, KVCC partners with local employers and unions, creating pathways for internships and apprenticeships that often lead directly to full-time employment. These partnerships keep the curriculum current and allow students to learn on the job, with the tools and expectations of their future careers.

As Maine continues to face a critical shortage of skilled workers, KVCC is proud to be part of the solution, helping students build bright futures while fueling the industries that keep our communities strong.



# HAPPENINGS AT KVCC

## New for Fall 2025: Student Lodging!

For the first time, KVCC will offer student lodging starting in Fall 2025. Fifty first-time, full-time students will have the opportunity to live just five minutes from campus at the Best Western Plus Waterville Grand Hotel. A trusted home-away-from-home for many in the KVCC community, the Best Western is known for its welcoming atmosphere and proximity to downtown.

Newly renovated student rooms will include two queen beds, a private bathroom, a TV, a mini-fridge, and a microwave. Students will have a meal plan and access to the hotel's pool, fitness center, and community spaces. A dedicated resident director will live on-site to support students and build a strong, connected living and learning community.

**Interested?**  
**Scan the QR code to apply.**



## Students Establish Rotaract Club to Serve the Community

KVCC President Normandin and Waterville Rotary Noon Club are proud to support KVCC's very own student Rotaract Club. The club was formed after KVCC students visited the University of Maine Farmington to connect with its Rotaract group. Moving forward, KVCC's Rotary and Rotaract members will collaborate on service projects, working independently and together to create meaningful change in our communities. Rotaract members benefit by strengthening their leadership skills and promoting volunteerism and a spirit of service.

In its early months, the club planted bulbs as part of the Yellow Tulip Project (YTP). The tulips are potent symbols of hope, resilience, and the organization's mission to reduce the stigma around mental illness.



# Music Returns to Moody Chapel

After a long, quiet stretch, it's been pure magic hearing music fill Moody Chapel again. In March, we were thrilled to welcome the Kennebec Performing Arts Company Jazz Band to our Alford Campus—a fantastic night of music and community. A special shoutout to Claudia Dunn, General Studies '25, who wowed us on the keys!

Later that month, Moody hosted a standout show by three award-winning singer-songwriters: Carole Wise, Jud Caswell, and Lisa Redfern. Fans packed the chapel, and the night ended with a standing ovation and a shared sense of joy.

In April, 16-year-old Bella Ann from Winslow brought down the house with her performance for a crowd of 60+. We're excited to keep the music going with more live shows on the horizon.

Check out upcoming events at [kvcc.me/edu](https://kvcc.me/edu)—we'd love to see you there.



## Building Bridges:

# The Beginnings of KVCC's Alumni Association

At KVCC, every student begins a journey that shapes their future—and now, we're excited to stay connected long after graduation. We're launching the KVCC Alumni Association to bring together graduates from every chapter of our history.

This new association is all about connection. It's a space where alumni can share their stories, support each other, and continue to be part of KVCC's vibrant community. Whether it's through mentorship, professional growth, or just staying in touch, we're creating ways for alumni to stay involved and help shape the future of our growing community.

No matter when you graduated, you're an important part of our KVCC family. We'd love for you to be part of this exciting new chapter. Visit our alumni page to learn more and see how you can get involved.

**Together, let's build bridges connecting KVCC's past, present, and future.**



## Calling all alumni!

We are building out Alumni News in this twice-annual newsletter, KVCC Happenings, and would like to let your KVCC friends, old and new, know what you have been up to.





## Big Changes for Occupational Therapy Assistant Program

The Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) program is making some exciting moves in 2025—literally and figuratively. With the demand for occupational therapy assistants on the rise, the program has been busy adapting to meet student and industry needs.

Starting this fall, students can complete the OTA program from just about anywhere in Maine thanks to a new virtual/hybrid format. Coursework can be done from home or on campus, and hands-on lab sessions will be offered at three locations across the state: KVCC, EMCC, and YCCC. Students will still be KVCC OTA students, even if they complete general education classes elsewhere in the Maine Community College System—and they'll graduate with a KVCC degree.

Another major update: after 33 years in King Hall on the Fairfield Campus, the program is moving to Averill Hall on KVCC's Alford Campus. The new space will include a dedicated classroom, a sensory room, updated labs, and faculty offices. This will allow for more collaboration on that campus with students in Early Childhood Education, Psychology, and Mental Health programs.

**“I’m thrilled to see the virtual lecture option! This expanded accessibility will empower more people to pursue this incredible and meaningful career path.”** —TIFF OWENS, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSISTANT, '25



Renovations are underway now, and the move is set for mid-summer. OTA faculty are also setting up class and lab spaces at EMCC to support student learning statewide.

Faculty have been spreading the word about all these changes and are more committed than ever to preparing skilled, entry-level OTAs ready to meet Maine's healthcare needs.

**“It’s exciting that KVCC is now offering students the opportunity to become occupational therapy assistants. It is the only associate-level program available in Maine.”** —KELLIE HUARD, OTA ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER





## Education Pathway Launched to Address Maine's Teacher Shortage

**“KVCC’s pathway is the ideal solution for Maine’s next generation of educators.”**

Maine faces a growing teacher shortage, impacting Pre-K through 12th grade in key subjects like math, science, English, and the arts. The Maine Department of Education (DOE) convened stakeholders statewide to address the shortage’s root causes—career pathway barriers, training access, and educator attrition. In response, Kennebec Valley Community College (KVCC) has launched an Education Pathway within its Liberal Studies program to help train the next generation of educators.

“KVCC’s pathway is the ideal solution for Maine’s next generation of educators,” says Mark McCafferty, co-chair of the Liberal Studies program. “You’ll save money, receive holistic advising and support, and be ready to transfer to a bachelor’s program.”



### Start Your Journey Today

Call Admissions at (207) 453-5822 or visit [kvcc.me.edu](https://kvcc.me.edu) to learn more.

## WHAT MAKES KVCC’S EDUCATION PATHWAY STAND OUT?

### Certification Preparation

Prepare for K-6, middle level, secondary, and special education certifications with coursework aligned to Maine DOE standards.

### Program Formats That Work for Everyone

Choose between 100% online, in-person, and hybrid courses that are ideal for working adults, recent high school grads, rural students, and high schoolers earning early college credit.

### Affordable and Scholarship-Eligible

Recent high school graduates may qualify for Maine’s free community college scholarships. Without free tuition, KVCC tuition is still 60% less than most four-year colleges, with ample financial aid options.

### Seamless Transfers to Maine Colleges

Transfer easily to schools like the University of Maine at Farmington and Thomas College through existing articulation agreements.



# KVCC FOUNDATION'S KENTUCKY DERBY GALA EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS

The Kennebec Valley Community College (KVCC) Foundation is celebrating a remarkable achievement following their recent Kentucky Derby Gala, "Off to the Races." The event, held on October 18, 2024, surpassed all expectations, raising over \$178,000—more than double the initial goal of \$80,000.

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The gala's success is a testament to the community's unwavering support and the dedication of sponsors who believe in the transformative power of education. The funds raised will provide essential financial assistance, expand scholarship offerings, and support various programs, ensuring that KVCC students can continue to learn, grow, and thrive, even in the face of unforeseen challenges.

The evening was truly unforgettable, with the Kennebec Room adorned in sophisticated Southern flair. Guests enjoyed delectable cuisine, refreshing drinks, dynamic dancing, and dapper Derby fashion. The highly popular auction added an extra layer of excitement, with attendees bidding on exclusive items and experiences.

The KVCC Foundation gives its heartfelt gratitude to all sponsors and supporters, emphasizing the crucial role they played in making the event a resounding success.

"Their contribution will significantly impact the lives of our students," the Foundation stated. "Together, we are empowering the next generation of leaders and innovators."

The Foundation looks forward to continuing this journey with their partners and hopes to see them at future KVCC events. The overwhelming success of the Kentucky Derby Gala is a shining example of what can be achieved when a community comes together with a shared purpose.

The KVCC Foundation is thrilled to announce the 2025 Gala, "KVCC Goes Hollywood," which promises another unforgettable evening of celebration. Mark your calendars for October 25, 2025, and join us as we roll out the red carpet for an exciting night of glamour, entertainment, and support for our students. We can't wait to see you there!

Scan here to  
make a donation.





# Exciting News from Athletics!



KVCC Athletics is growing! With Golf, Track & Field, and Cross Country already in full swing, we're thrilled to announce the expansion of our sports offerings.

Starting in Fall 2025, Men's and Women's Basketball will make their official debut! We're proud to welcome Matthew Kenna as Head Coach of Men's Basketball and Rusty Mercier as Head Coach of Women's Basketball. Both bring a wealth of experience and passion to the court and are ready to build dynamic, competitive programs rooted in teamwork and student success.

Speaking of the court, have you seen the transformation at the Alfond Recreation Center? The gym now features a brand-new, college-regulation basketball court, beautifully finished in KVCC's school colors and proudly displaying our college mascot. This exciting upgrade reflects our commitment to creating top-tier athletic and recreational spaces for our students and community.

We are equally excited about the fall season for our Golf and Cross-Country teams. "In our third season, we'll continue to see our program grow and develop," said KVCC Athletic Director and



Pictured from left: Matthew Kenna, Head Coach of Men's Basketball and Rusty Mercier, Head Coach of Women's Basketball.



Cross-Country Coach Stephen Wing. "We've got great interest from students and cannot wait to see what the future holds for our teams."

Head Golf Coach Scott Ballard predicts that, "KVCC's Golf team will put itself on the map this year." Ballard says that having a KVCC home at Fogg Brook Resort in Palmyra ensures that players will be able to practice whenever they can, without any fees. This, too, will make the team more competitive."

We can't wait to tip off this new chapter in KVCC Athletics. Go LYNX!



# Building Science, a Workforce Training Program

Building Science participants conducted energy audits during the program's first run in Fall 2024. The hands-on experience benefits both students and homeowners. Energy audits—typically costing upwards of \$500—help improve comfort, efficiency, and indoor air quality.

During 2.5-hour audits, students install a blower door to depressurize the home and simulate 20 mph winds, common in Maine's cold seasons. This allows them to measure air changes per hour (ACH), a key energy efficiency indicator. While new homes must maintain three or fewer ACH, older



Maine homes can reach 20 to 40 ACH, leading to constant reheating and high heating costs. Students also use infrared cameras to identify heat loss and air leakage.

Homeowners receive detailed reports with recommendations. For students, the training supports Building Performance Institute (BPI) certification. Participants joined the 2024 program to advance careers, gain new skills, or pursue lifelong learning. The course was free thanks to a grant from the Governor's Energy Office.

Instructor Colin McCullough from Southern Maine Community College enjoys teaching KVCC's diverse and motivated students. "It's a great way to learn about building science and explore energy efficiency careers," he says.

The next Building Science class begins in Fall 2025. Visit [kvcc.me.edu/workforce](https://kvcc.me.edu/workforce) to learn more or register.







Pictured from left: Academics: Jodi Chase, Talia Grazulis; Financial Services: Denise Bouvier, Patricia Moody-D'Angelo, Rose Griffin, Tracy Brackett

## New Faces on Campus

### Academics

Jodi Chase, *Respiratory Therapy Faculty*

Talia Grazulis, *Assistant Registrar*

Derek Hodgkins, *EMS Faculty*

Dylan Reichert, *Instructional Support Information Systems Specialist*

### Financial Services

Denise Bouvier, *Cashier, Accounting Assistant*

Tracy Brackett, *Bursar, Accountant*

Rose Griffin, *Payroll Manager*

Patricia Moody-D'Angelo, *Associate Dean of Finance & Administration*

### President's Office

Jody Leary, *Executive Assistant to the President*

### Student Services

Elizabeth Belle Isle, *Director of Communications and Marketing*

Eric Brown, *Community Civic Engagement Coordinator*

Marisellia "Mari" Greenlaw, *Embark College Access Advisor*

Corey Pelletier, *Assistant Director of Enrollment*

Matthew Kenna, *Men's Head Basketball Coach and Residence Director*

Pictured from left: Student Services: Matthew Kenna, Marisella "Mari" Greenlaw, Eric Brown, Corey Pelletier, and Elizabeth Belle Isle; President's Office: Jody Leary





# IN MEMORIAM

## Remembering Our KVCC Family

At KVCC, we carry the memories of our alumni, students, and friends who have passed with deep respect and affection. They remain a lasting part of our community.

If there is someone special we should remember, please feel free to share their obituary with us at [kvcccommunications@maineccc.edu](mailto:kvcccommunications@maineccc.edu). We will add information on their passing in a future KVCC Happenings issue and on our website.



Scan for additional reflections.

**Elise Astrosky**, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSISTANT

**Daryl Bragg**, LIBERAL STUDIES '11

**Alex Davenport**, BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION '99,  
ACCOUNTING '01

**Chuck Feyler**, COMPUTER SCIENCE '14

**Melanie Feyler**, ACCOUNTING '96, HEALTH  
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

**Emily Marchesi**, CULINARY ARTS '23

**Lisa Nickerson**, MEDICAL ASSISTING '99

**Brock Peters**, PSYCHOLOGY

**O'Brien Plaisted**, GENERAL STUDIES '19

**Richard 'Woody' Tarbuck**, KVCC ACADEMIC ADVISOR

*Note: Listings for students who graduated from KVCC will include a program name followed by the year of program completion.*







## DONOR SPOTLIGHT: Generous Donors Bring New Life to Art Programming

KVCC proudly announces the generous donation of a dedicated art room by longtime supporters Peter Garrett and Jean Ann Pollard. Located in Lunder Hall, this new space marks a significant milestone in enhancing KVCC's art courses.



The newly outfitted art room provides KVCC students with a well-equipped and inspiring environment to explore their creativity and develop their artistic talents. "The dedicated art space features individual easels and ample storage," said Garrett. "This ensures that all art supplies are organized and easily accessible, enabling students to focus more on their creative process rather than searching for materials."

Garrett emphasized the value of integrating art more fully into the College curriculum. "Art education is crucial for developing critical thinking, problem-solving, and fine motor skills. By offering a structured and supportive environment, we can nurture our students' artistic talents and encourage them to express themselves through various mediums."

Jean Ann Pollard, an accomplished artist and author, has long believed in the power of creativity. She began expressing herself through art as a young child in Maine and has never stopped creating. Over the years, her prolific work has spanned poetry, short stories, articles, cookbooks, a novel, and an environmental history of Maine. Her latest painting collection, the Gaia Series, focuses on Earth's climate and reflects a deep connection to the natural world.

Pollard says she appreciates the College's commitment to listening to student voices and supporting their ambitions. "If a student wishes to develop their art talent, the College's art instructors will help them to grow, wherever their journey may lead," she said. To Pollard, both painting and writing "speak to us" and are an essential part of human expression.

The impact of the Garretts' donation is already being felt. Cynthia Ahstrin, a KVCC art instructor, noted how transformative the new equipment and storage have been for her students. "It has been wonderful to see my students work on easels during class as another way to view their still life set-ups, gesture models, or when working en plein air on landscapes and urban sketches," she said. "Standing is often the best way to draw, and the easels that the Garretts donated give us the ability to do this. We are so grateful for their kindness and ongoing support of the arts at KVCC and throughout Maine."



# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT:

## Cindy Stevens

From Small-Town Roots to Big-Time Success

Cindy Stevens grew up in New Vineyard, one of seven kids in a home built on hard work, honesty, and self-belief. Her favorite childhood book, *The Little Engine That Could*, became her personal motto—and her life is proof that believing in yourself really does pay off.

### Early Challenges, Strong Spirit

Cindy began her education in a tiny two-room schoolhouse, which was destroyed and led her to continue her studies in Farmington. Despite being initially placed in lower-tier classes, Cindy's determination shone through. She didn't let that define her. She excelled in school, joined the yearbook staff, tried cheerleading, and even won the State Spelling Bee.

### Choosing a Different Path

Although she was accepted to Bowdoin College, financial challenges led her to Kennebec Valley Vocational-Technical Institute (now KVCC), where she enrolled in the Marketing Diploma program. She was the only woman in her class, surrounded by older students on the GI Bill. This helped her find confidence and a new direction.



### Career Milestones

An internship at the Morning Sentinel newspaper quickly turned into a full-time sales role. In a male-dominated field, Cindy thrived, eventually becoming sales manager, then holding leadership roles in HR, finance, and advertising across three newspapers over 35 years.

### Lifelong Learning, Local Impact

While working full-time, Cindy earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Maine at Augusta and a master's from Thomas College. She credits KVCC with giving her the practical skills and support she needed to build a successful career.

Today, Cindy continues to make a difference through her work with the Mid-Maine Chamber of Commerce, helping local businesses grow through programs and sponsorships.

### Words of Wisdom for Grads

**“Take a page from my book and use the experiences you have had here at Kennebec Valley Community College to move forward in whichever field you desire. Never let anyone convince you that you cannot succeed at anything you set your mind to. I went from ‘I think I can’ to ‘I know I can.’ I did it, and you, too, can do the same.”**

Cindy's story reminds us all: it's not where you start—it's where you're headed.





# KENNEBEC VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

YOUR BRIDGE TO A BRIGHTER FUTURE

92 Western Avenue  
Fairfield, ME 04937

[kvcc.me.edu](http://kvcc.me.edu)

Admissions: 207.453.5822

[kvccadmissions@maineccc.edu](mailto:kvccadmissions@maineccc.edu)



The next issue of *KVCC Happenings* will include May 2025 Commencement highlights.