

# KVCC HAPPENINGS

*Kennebec Valley Community College*

Spring 2026 | Vol. 3

KVCC.ME.EDU



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# MAINE FREE COLLEGE IMPACT

Maine Free College has transformed educational opportunities for thousands of high school students. In 2026, Maine Free College reached a milestone when it became a permanent part in the State's budget ensuring future generations of students will continue to have access to tuition free community college and the opportunity to build strong future for themselves and their communities

## **Megan Newsome, *Business Administration***

Free college has helped me so much. It has helped ease the stress of being able to afford all my textbooks and classes. It makes it easier for kids like me who may have grown up in families where in the past they couldn't afford to go to college. It helps kids whose parents couldn't go to college, and you are the first person in the family to go and succeed.

## **Selene Metts, *Business Administration***

"When I earned my HiSET certificate and learned that I was eligible for a free associate degree through Maine's community college system, I knew I had to take the opportunity. In that moment, I realized my life was about to change in a major way. As someone who grew up low-income and left high school to support myself, higher education never felt truly attainable for me. Attending Kennebec Valley Community College over the past two years has completely transformed the way I see myself, interact with the world, and show up for the people around me. I have gained confidence in my ability to make thoughtful decisions, overcome challenges, and keep moving forward even after setbacks. I stepped outside of my comfort zone, discovered strengths I did not know I had, and built meaningful relationships and connections that will stay with me for a lifetime. The Maine Free College program gave me more than an education — it gave me hope, confidence, and the chance to build a better future. Because of this opportunity, I am now in a position to give back, support others, and create positive change in my community in return."

## **Aubrey Obert, *Business Administration***

Free college was honestly one of the best opportunities I could have received. During my junior and senior years of high school, I spent so much time worrying about whether I would even be able to afford college. Even with scholarships, I was scared that student loans and debt would become overwhelming.

Then one day, a brochure about free community college landed on my desk (literally) and everything changed. I immediately felt a wave of hopefulness and excitement because, for the first time, college seemed possible; without all the fear of financial stress. That was the moment I realized I could pursue the degree I wanted while still being able to work, save money, and prepare for transferring after two years.

There are times when I question whether I made the right choice, but then I think about how much money I've been able to save and how much less stress I've had because of free college. Looking back, it gave me the chance to continue my education and work toward my future in a way that actually felt achievable.

## **Madison Smith, *Mental Health***

The Maine Free College has helped me as it made going to college sooner a much stronger possibility and less overwhelming financially. Realizing I had qualified for the Maine Free College was the main reason I immediately applied and it has encouraged me to push through all my semesters. As a full-time online student at KVCC studying Mental Health, the scholarship has allowed me to focus solely on my classes and work towards my degree without having the added stress of tuition costs. It has made me feel much more confident as a student and it has given me the opportunity to pursue a career where I will eventually be able to aid others.

## **Christina Fisher, *Early Childhood***

The free college scholarship helped me as I graduated high school in 2022 and was not really able to work through high school because of Covid. My parents had other things to pay for so being able to go to college for free really helped me out. This scholarship also helped my family because I didn't have to pay a lot to go to college and we didn't have to take out any loans. It made college possible for me!

## **Megan Roy, *Early Childhood***

The Free College Scholarship has made such a meaningful difference in my life. As someone who is working hard to become an elementary teacher, having this financial support has allowed me to focus on my classes and field experiences instead of constantly worrying about how I would pay for college. It has brought me one step closer to achieving my dream of having my own classroom and making a positive impact on the lives of children.

Without this scholarship, continuing my education would have been much more stressful and financially overwhelming. Knowing that others believe in my goals has motivated me to keep pushing forward, and I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to pursue a career that I am truly passionate about.



Pictured are several KVCC employees who make a difference in students' lives every day. Through guidance and support, these teams—Advising, HOPE, Embark, JMG, Workforce, and TRIO—help students navigate challenges, build confidence, and stay on the path to success.

# SUPPORT EVERY STEP OF THE WAY

Sometimes the hardest part of college isn't the classes, it's taking that first step. Walking through a door. Making a call. Sending that first email.

At KVCC, people reach out in all kinds of ways and at all stages of life.

Maybe they're a high school student nudged by the guidance office staff to meet a KVCC admissions rep for the first time. Maybe they're someone in their thirties who was driving by and decided to stop in to ask about career training. Or someone in their fifties, quietly admitting over the phone that they've always wanted to go to college, but worry they'll be the oldest person in the room.

Here's the truth: there's no wrong time to start. The admissions team is here to help each person who walks through our doors feel less stressed and a lot more excited about what's possible. Visitors visually relax when they realize how simple the application process is (just a few steps!) and are relieved to know that admissions staff is there to support them.

Students come to KVCC for all kinds of reasons, and they're all the right ones. Some arrive knowing the exact program they want; some want to be close to home; and others come because of our affordability. Whether you're planning to take a few classes, earn a degree, or transfer to a four-year program, we'll happily walk with you as you begin your journey.

Learners are often surprised to learn just how flexible KVCC can be, with part-time and online options designed to fit busy lives. However you come to KVCC, whatever your goals, your timeline, or your hesitations, we will meet you where you are.

And that support doesn't stop once you apply.

At KVCC, we know that student success is built on a foundation of comprehensive support to help learners persist, stay on track, achieve their academic goals, and complete their programs. Every student is connected with an advisor to plan their degree path, explore majors, and receive guidance on course decisions. The Advising Center also offers orientation, transfer support, career guidance, and referrals to other resources. Whether you prefer to meet in person, talk on the phone, connect online, or even text, we are here for you.

We also offer extra support programs such as TRIO and HOPE for additional professional advising and resources, as well as partnerships with Jobs for Maine Graduates (JMG) and EMBARK.

No matter where you are starting from, students receive advising and academic support for their educational journey at KVCC and beyond.



KVCC Admissions staff guide, encourage, and support students from their very first step—helping turn uncertainty into confidence and possibility.

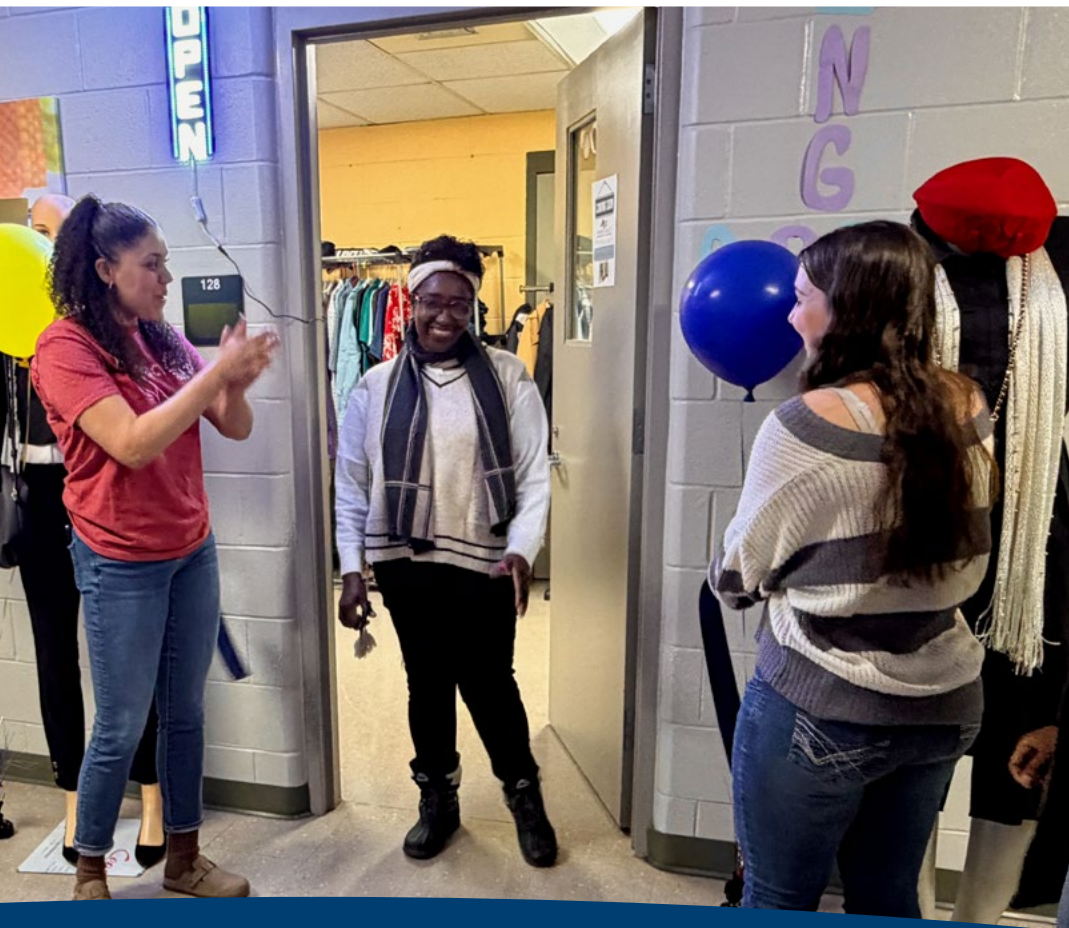
# HAPPENINGS

## PTK All-USA Academic Team

We proudly recognize three students selected to the prestigious Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) All-USA Academic Team, a national honor celebrating community college students who excel in academics, leadership, and service. This recognition is awarded by nomination and highlights both transfer and workforce students who make a meaningful impact beyond the classroom. This year's honorees are Desiree Kelly (Nursing), Selene Metts (Business Administration), and Bridgett Wooten (Physical Therapy Assistant). Their achievements reflect KVCC's commitment to student success and academic excellence across all programs.



All-USA Academic Team, pictured from left, Bridgett Wooten (PTA), Selene Metts (Business Admin), and Desiree Kelly (Nursing)



## New Clothing Closet

KVCC is excited to introduce a new Clothing Closet in King Hall. The Closet has been created to help ensure students have access to the clothing they need for class, work, interviews, and everyday life in a welcoming, supportive environment. Managed by the KVCC Rotaract Club, the Clothing Closet accepts donations of lightly used professional clothing and accessories from the KVCC community and local partners. This initiative helps remove barriers for students, ensuring they have what they need to feel prepared and confident as they focus on their education. We are especially grateful to Rotaract Club member Audrey Lilly for her determined effort to get the closet open this spring.

### Follow KVCC on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn

to catch classroom highlights, campus happenings, upcoming events, and ways to get involved.

[f KVCC.MAINE](#) [@kvcc.me](#) [in school/kennebec-valley-community-college/](#)

Athletics: [f KVCClynx](#) [@KVCClynx](#)

# HIM Program and Maine Cancer Registry Collaborate

The Health Information Management (HIM) program and the Maine Cancer Registry are collaborating to offer more learning opportunities for KVCC's students. The Registry presented to HIM and Medical Coding Certificate students in the fall, agreeing to host HIM students for their Directed Practice internships. HIM student Auna Smart will complete her internship with them this spring. Carolyn Bancroft, Director of the Maine Cancer Registry, plans to present the benefits of hosting student interns at the National Cancer Registrar's Association annual meeting this May.



HIM student Auna Smart, center, with Cancer Registry staff, Spring 2026

# Student of the Year

KVCC proudly celebrates Jasmine Sanders of Augusta as its 2026 Student of the Year. Honored during the annual Student of the Year Celebration at KVCC and at a ceremony at Maple Hill Farm in Hallowell to celebrate the nominees from all Maine community colleges, Jasmine stood among an exceptional group of nominees from the Class of 2026, all recognized for their achievements and impact.

A Nursing student, Jasmine will earn her degree this May marking a major milestone in an already impressive journey. She previously earned her Liberal Studies degree in 2024, demonstrating both determination and academic excellence. On campus, she serves as President of Rotaract

and Phi Theta Kappa, a Student Senate Ambassador, and an active member of multiple organizations. Through TRIO, she is a dedicated advocate for students.

Jasmine also serves as the Student Trustee on the Maine Community College System Board of Trustees, appointed to a two-year term beginning in late 2025. Balancing school, full-time work as a CNA, and raising two children, she exemplifies resilience, leadership, and service.



2026 Student of the Year Nominees (from left to right): Jasmine Sanders (Nursing), Jade Maginnis (Accounting), Selene Metts (Business Administration), Erin Chute (Biological Sciences), and Adam Lawrence (Paramedic), with President Normandin



# Students Represent Maine at Leadership Conference

Kenneth Hagen and Kayla Moore, Radiologic Technology (RAD) students in the Class of 2026, represented Maine at the American Society of Radiologic Technologists (ASRT) 2025 Student Leadership Development Program. This competitive program selects just two to three students per state, recognizing emerging leaders in radiologic science.

As part of the experience, Kenneth and Kayla attended the 2025 ASRT Educational Symposium and Annual Meeting in Reno, Nevada, where they participated in educational sessions, explored the profession, and connected with peers and industry leaders from across the country. They also gained insight into professional advocacy, patient care standards, and emerging technologies shaping the future of medical imaging.

Their selection highlights their dedication to the field and commitment to leadership, advocacy, and lifelong learning, qualities that reflect the strong future of radiologic science. Their experience brings valuable perspective back to the classroom and strengthens KVCC's connection to the broader healthcare community.



## Steel-Pro Partnership Brings Real-World Welding Experience to Students

Welding students gained valuable, hands-on experience through a week-long training with Steel-Pro, a Rockland-based stainless steel equipment manufacturer.

For the second year, Steel-Pro brought its team to KVCC's welding lab, providing curriculum, instruction, and specialized materials focused on stainless-steel welding for high-precision manufacturing. The experience gave students the opportunity to learn directly from industry professionals, practice industry-standard techniques, and to build confidence in the lab.

Steel-Pro President and CEO Steve Ladd said the partnership creates more meaningful connections than traditional hiring. "This gives us time to get to know each other, what we do, who we are, and helps students see if it's the right fit."

The collaboration is already producing positive results. Following the March training, Steel-Pro invited select students to tour its facilities and pursue interviews with the company.

Students trained alongside Steel-Pro welder Dalton Rossignol, and KVCC welding alumni, Elijah Perry, who returned to help train students. Elijah was also able to tell students what it was like moving from KVCC's welding lab to a welding position at Steel-Pro.

Experiences like this strengthen KVCC's connections with Maine employers while preparing students for in-demand careers, creating a direct pathway from classroom learning to the workforce.



Maine delegates included (from left to right) Jennifer Rines (RAD Program Director and MSRT President), Kayla Moore (RAD Student), Kenneth Hagen (RAD Student), Mark Ackerman (SLDP Participant), Brenda Parker-Hanna (MSRT Board Chair)

# Student Participates in STEM Teaching Program

Paris Chretien, a Biological Sciences student, was one of eight Maine Community College students selected to participate in *Growing Future STEM Teachers in Maine*, an intensive five-day course held at Saint Joseph's College in January 2026.

In partnership between Saint Joseph's College and Southern Maine Community College (SMCC), the program is designed to expand the pool of highly qualified secondary STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) teachers in Maine.

Throughout the week, participants progressed from observing classroom instruction to developing lesson plans and teaching students at Jordan Small Middle School. Hands-on activities included balloon-powered cars, strawberry DNA extraction, forensic science investigations, and lessons on Maine ecosystems.

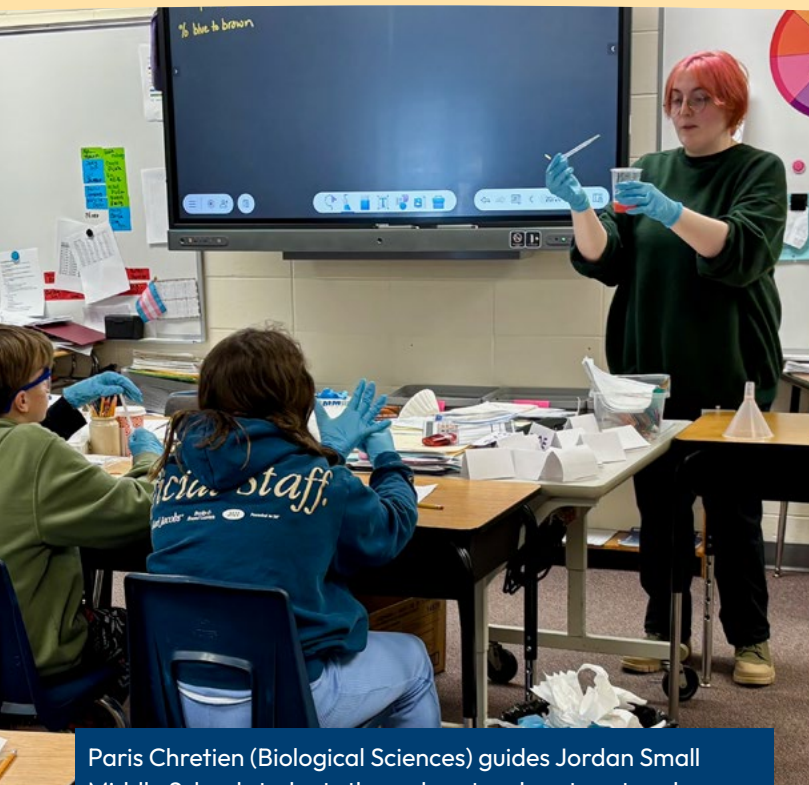
Supported by the National Science Foundation, the program provides immersive STEM learning and practical teaching experience. Chretien participated alongside students from SMCC and York County Community College.



## Increased Nursing Program Capacity Benefits Central Maine

Maine is facing a critical nursing shortage, with a projected need for more than 2,800 registered nurses by the year 2030. In response, the state launched a multifaceted effort through LD 1807, a Maine bill that provided funding to expand nursing education programs. The Maine Community College System increased enrollment across all seven colleges, including KVCC.

KVCC's Nursing Department grew from 40 seats to 56 and implemented a multiple-measures admissions process to reach capacity. As a result, more students are enrolling, graduating, and passing the licensure exam each year. These new nurses are entering the workforce locally, helping strengthen healthcare access, and support communities across central Maine.



Paris Chretien (Biological Sciences) guides Jordan Small Middle School students through a step-by-step strawberry DNA extraction demonstration.



# CAREER & TRANSFER FAIR

## Connecting Community to Opportunity

KVCC brought opportunity and energy to campus on April 1 with its annual Career and Transfer Fair, welcoming students, alumni, and community members to the Fairfield campus. The event connected attendees with more than 50 organizations and colleges from across Maine—each offering a pathway forward, whether into the workforce or onto a four-year campus. As organizer Director of Workforce Training Caroline Ridout noted, the fair created “a chance to support future goals by connecting with businesses, organizations, and schools from throughout the state.”

Employers representing a wide range of industries were on hand, giving students direct access to opportunities

aligned with their programs of study. From healthcare and business to skilled trades and clean energy, students and visitors explored career paths, and made meaningful connections. These conversations helped attendees see not just what’s possible, but what’s next.

The fair went beyond networking, also offering hands-on career readiness workshops like *Your Professional Presence*, *Interview Skills: Tips and Tricks*, and *How to Transfer with Ease*.

More than just an event, the 2026 Career and Transfer Fair was a launchpad, equipping attendees with the connections and confidence to take their next step.

# FINDING MY FUTURE AT KVCC

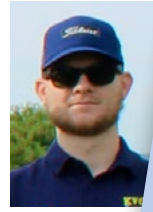
## **Owen Upton, Lineworker Program, Newport, Maine**

Two years in, studying Athletics and Sports Management at the University of Southern Maine, everything changed when Owen saw a crew of linemen at work. In that moment, he knew he had found his calling and now aims to become an aerial lineman. Drawn to KVCC's affordable program, Owen respects his faculty for the real-world skills and knowledge they bring to his training.



## **Kenneth Hagen, Radiological Technology, Student Veteran, Berwick, Maine**

Kenneth Hagen, a student veteran, brings discipline, determination, and a strong sense of purpose to his studies at KVCC. After serving in the military, he chose the college for its supportive, student-focused environment. Kenneth says the Radiology program stands out for its strong clinical focus and hands-on patient care experience. He values the connections he has with faculty and peers, and the resources available to help him succeed as a veteran working toward a meaningful career.



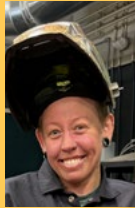
## **Kaleb Poitras, Lineworker Program, Vassalboro, Maine**

Kaleb's interest in the trades began in high school through a technical career program. Seeking a practical, well-paying path, he found the Lineworker program and knew it was the right fit. He says small class sizes helped him connect with classmates who share his interests. With hands-on training and supportive faculty, Kaleb is building the skills and confidence to succeed.



## **Gina Hartford, Welding Program, Litchfield, Maine**

After ten years as a registered Maine Guide in the rafting industry, Gina was drawn to the welding program's academic timeline and affordability. As a student, she developed a newfound passion for welding and the field's hands-on nature. She is considering complementing her welding training with additional workforce training opportunities and a future as a millwright through the local union.



## **Jennifer Bosse, Health Information Management, Presque Isle, Maine**

Jennifer began her career in health records at Northern Maine Community College, earning a Coding Certificate before continuing into KVCC's Health Information Management program. While working as a patient representative, she became interested in remote career opportunities within the field. Jennifer credits KVCC's supportive faculty for helping her succeed through dedicated online guidance. With strong instruction and support, she is building the skills and confidence needed for a successful future.



## **Marie Cole, Early Childhood Education, Bath, Maine**

Marie chose KVCC based on positive feedback about the college and its Early Childhood Education program. Marie values the respectful, supportive faculty and the program's flexibility as a stay-at-home mom. The online format and responsive instructors have helped her stay engaged. Through fieldwork, she's gained hands-on experience working with young children. Marie plans to become an educational technician, with the long-term goal of leading her own preschool classroom.



## **Natalie Coleman, Nursing, Bucksport, Maine**

Natalie, a first-year nursing student from Bucksport, Maine, holds a bachelor's degree in human development from the University of Maine at Orono. She previously worked in substance abuse and early intervention services in Massachusetts, where she discovered her passion for nursing. Natalie chose KVCC for its welcoming environment, supportive community, and strong connections with faculty. She works part-time as a lab technician at Franklin Memorial Hospital and is exploring emergency and ICU nursing.



## **Noah Liscord, Nursing, Wayne, Maine**

While exploring Nursing programs, Noah received wonderful reviews from KVCC alumni and medical staff about its nursing program. After spending time on the campus, he noted a strong sense of community and a personal connection with faculty and staff that makes the program even more meaningful. He says the program is challenging and that he is grateful for the support he has received from the nursing faculty.



## **Meadow Cyr, General Studies, Transfer Student, Norridgewock, Maine**

Meadow chose KVCC as a smart, supportive starting point for her college journey and future transfer. With small classes, strong faculty connections, personalized advising, and extra support from TRIO, Meadow plans to transfer to the University of Southern Maine to pursue a bachelor's in Health Sciences, with the long-term goal of becoming a cardiothoracic surgical physician assistant.



# A Red-Carpet Success: Gala Raises \$141,000 for Students

The spotlight shone brightly on student success at the fall 2025 KVCC Hollywood Gala, where guests, donors, and community partners came together for an unforgettable night of celebration and philanthropy. Organizers announced that final fundraising totals reached \$141,000, surpassing the original goal of \$120,000 and marked one of the most successful galas in KVCC Foundation history.

The achievement represents more than just an impressive number. It is a powerful testament to the community's commitment to ensuring that all KVCC students have access to the resources they need to achieve their goals. Funds raised will directly support scholarships, emergency aid, and other critical initiatives that help remove financial barriers and open doors to opportunity.

From the red-carpet arrivals to the final paddle raise, the evening sparkled with energy and generosity. Attendees bid enthusiastically on auction items, raised their paddles during a spirited live auction, shared toasts, and lent their voices to the cause throughout the celebration. Every contribution, large or small, played a role in reaching this milestone.

"This total is a standing ovation for our students and a celebration of their dreams," said the KVCC Foundation.

Jennifer Casey, Executive Director of the KVCC Foundation, added, "Your generosity sends a clear message. Our students have a community that believes in them and is invested in their futures."

The Foundation extended heartfelt thanks to all who participated in and supported the event. "Whether you bid, raised your paddle, shared a toast, or simply joined us for a memorable evening, you were part of something truly meaningful. On behalf of the KVCC Foundation and the students whose lives you have touched, thank you for being part of our story."

The success of the 2025 KVCC Hollywood Gala will have a lasting impact, long after the curtains have closed and the lights have dimmed!



The KVCC Foundation is pleased to announce that next year's gala, **An Evening in the Emerald City**, will take place on October 23, 2026. Save the date for another unforgettable night.



# Inaugural Basketball Season a Success



The KVCC Lynx men's basketball team closed out its inaugural season in impressive fashion, capturing the 2026 Central Maine Invitational Tournament Championship at Central Maine Community College.

Tyler Knight was named to the All-Tournament Team, while Brian Palmer earned Tournament MVP honors. It was a remarkable finish to a memorable first season—one that signals a bright future for Lynx basketball.

## Sport Management Program Launches this Fall

KVCC will launch a new Sport Management associate degree program in fall 2026, providing an affordable pathway into careers in sports, recreation, and event management.

Housed within KVCC's Business Department, the program combines core business coursework with sport-specific classes in areas such as marketing, public relations, and event management. Students will be prepared for entry-level careers or to transfer to a bachelor's program. KVCC is developing transfer agreements with four-year colleges.

"Sports and recreation are an important part of our communities and our economy in Maine," said President Karen Normandin. "This program gives students an affordable way to turn their passion for sports into a meaningful career."

As the most affordable pathway to a sport management degree in New England, KVCC allows students to complete their first two years locally before transferring, helping them avoid the higher cost of a four-year institution.

"With the expansion of the College's athletic programs, including men's and women's basketball, we're seeing growing interest from students who want careers connected to sports," said Dean of Student Affairs, CJ McKenna.

The program emphasizes hands-on learning and workplace readiness, offering opportunities for real-world experience through local sporting events and KVCC athletics. Flexible course formats—in-person, hybrid, and online options—help students balance school with work and life commitments. For more information, visit [kvcc.me.edu/sport\\_management](https://www.kvcc.me.edu/sport_management) or call (207) 453-5822.



Coach of Women's Basketball Team and newly appointed Athletic Director, Rusty Mercier said, "We are incredibly proud of this group for setting the tone for KVCC Lynx women's basketball and creating momentum that will carry into the 2026-27 season. The best is yet to come!"

# A President's Legacy

The Barbara Woodlee Civic Scholar award was created to honor the legacy of Barbara Woodlee, a leader known for her dedication to community engagement, public service, and civic responsibility. Inspired by President Woodlee's belief that education should extend beyond the classroom, the program recognizes students who demonstrate a deep commitment to improving their communities through service and leadership.



Barbara Woodlee, KVCC's first president, with her husband, Jim, at the 2025 KVCC Hollywood Gala.

Throughout her career, President Woodlee emphasized that meaningful change begins at the local level. She often encouraged students and community members to become active participants in addressing social challenges, volunteering their time, and building partnerships that strengthen neighborhoods. The Civic Scholar designation reflects these values by celebrating individuals who follow her example.

Students recognized as Barbara Woodlee Civic Scholars are selected for their sustained involvement in community initiatives. Many work with local nonprofits, organize service projects, mentor younger students, or advocate for issues that affect their communities.

Students have partnered with a wide range of organizations, including the American Red Cross, MaineGeneral Medical Center, Special Olympics Maine, Waterville Rotary, Somerset Humane Society, and local schools, nonprofits, and community groups.

Program organizers say the award is not only a recognition of past achievements but also an encouragement for continued service.

"President Woodlee believed that leadership is measured by how we uplift others," said President Normandin. "The Civic Scholar program highlights students who embody that principle and make a real difference in the lives of those around them."

As the program grows, the Barbara Woodlee Civic Scholar title stands as a reminder of the impact individuals can have when they dedicate their talents to the common good.

Since September 2023, 157 students have logged more than 3,500 volunteer hours through the GivePulse platform, which tracks service learning and community engagement. This academic year alone, 50 students have already recorded hours, with participation continuing to grow.

# Pitch Competition

KVCC's Business Entrepreneurship program is helping turn ideas into viable businesses while building confidence, skills, and economic opportunity in our region.

This past fall 2025, the program supported a cohort of eight aspiring entrepreneurs, with seven successfully completing the course. Throughout the program, students developed business concepts, strengthened their planning skills, and prepared to bring their ideas to life.

The program culminated in a pitch competition, where five participants presented their businesses to a panel of judges and community members. Featured ventures included SlayGround, CredAtlas, Steady Elm Virtual Solutions, Whimsical Glow, and Just Playing with Glass.

The evening highlighted the creativity, determination, and growth of the students. Sonya Theriault earned first place for her business, SlayGround, and was awarded \$1,000. Second place was awarded to Steady Elm Virtual Solutions, a business providing administrative support and social media campaign services, earning a \$500 prize. Prize money for the competition was made possible through a generous \$12,000 donation from the KVCC Foundation, supporting current and future student entrepreneurs.

The event not only celebrated student success but also reinforced the value of hands-on entrepreneurship education in building confidence and real-world skills.

Business Entrepreneurship instructor Ashleigh Briggs (left), along with several pitch participants from the fall course.



# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: From Student to Higher Education Leader, **Tobby Bragdon**

“KVCC showed me that I was capable of far more than I had been told to expect.”

College was never part of the conversation for **Tobby Bragdon** while growing up. In a family where most had not completed high school, higher education simply was not something people talked about or prepared for. So when a guidance counselor asked about post graduation plans during junior year, the most honest answer was the restaurant job already in hand.

That conversation shifted the path ahead. The counselor mentioned an EMT program at **Kennebec Valley Community College (KVCC)**, a one semester option with specialized training and a clear next step. It sounded manageable, attainable, and possible. The program was completed, the ride time logged, and it quickly became clear that emergency medicine was not the right fit.

But something unexpected happened along the way. **KVCC** had become familiar ground. The campus felt welcoming, the community felt supportive, and that sense of belonging was strong enough to change what felt attainable.

Drawn back by that comfort, he enrolled in the **Mental Health** program, ultimately earning an associate degree. A work study job on campus opened a new window and offered the first real glimpse of what a career in higher education might look like. That glimpse became a spark for **Tobby**, one that would shape the next decade of his life.

It inspired a transfer to the **University of Maine** at **Augusta (UMA)** to complete a bachelor's degree, then onward to the **University of Maine** for a master's in education.

What followed was a decade of working with college students and teaching as an adjunct at the community college level, where a deep and genuine love for campus life continued to grow.

That passion led to a doctoral program in higher education, with a specialization in policy studies and instructional design. The dissertation examined transfer and articulation agreements between community colleges and four-year public institutions, a topic understood both academically and personally after navigating the transition from **KVCC** to **UMA**. After defending the dissertation came roles as an academic dean and eventually a full-time faculty member at **Central Maine Community College**. Recently, this research was published in the *Journal of Community College Research and Practice*.

Reflecting on the journey, one truth stands out clearly. **KVCC** was the place where everything opened up. It was where confidence took root, where possibilities expanded, and where a new sense of direction first took shape.

“For someone who never considered college, **KVCC** showed me I belonged there and that I was capable of far more than I had been told to expect. The people there did not just support my education. They reshaped my trajectory, my economic circumstances, and my sense of purpose.”

Many institutions have played a part in his career, but for **Tobby** **KVCC** remains the foundation. It remains home.



## Are you an alumni?

We'd love to hear from you. To join the alumni association, to submit class notes, or to update your information visit [kvcc.me.edu/alumni](https://kvcc.me.edu/alumni)



# New Hires and New Roles

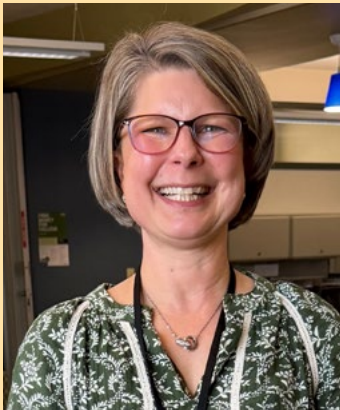


**Jennifer Baker**, Human Resources Manager  
**Brianne Pushor**, Dean of Finance and Administration  
**Caroline Ridout**, Director of Workforce Training



## Emergency Medical Services

**Erin Bean**, EMS Faculty  
**Brigid Newhall**, EMS Clinical Coordinator  
**Timothy Beals**, EMS Program Director



**Heather Starbuck**, Health Information Management Faculty  
**Jacob Adams-Cheney**, Student Success Advisor



## Financial Aid Office

**Sharon Coolen**, Assistant Director of Financial Aid  
**Nicole Caruso**, Financial Aid Counselor



**Duncan Farley**, Director of Student Life  
**Rusty Mercier**, Athletic Director

# Remembering Jannie Durr

July 1, 1976–August 30, 2025



From her very first interview for Director of Student Life, we all knew why Jannie was the perfect fit. Her laugh was infectious. Her smile was constant. Her advocacy for her values was fierce. She fought hard

for students. And all humans. And animals. Especially dogs. Especially her beloved Rosie, who conspicuously won the Performing for the Pets photo contest two years in a row.

Jannie loved everything purple. She loved Almond Joy. She loved riddles. She loved Talking Heads. She loved Cribbage. She collected thimbles. Her office was an explosion of color, and toys, and event supplies. Part pop culture museum, part Student Life storage room, and entirely Jannie, her personality on display in every banner and boardgame and bobblehead figurine. It exuded warmth. A chair was always available to a friend in need, even if it had to be cleared off first.

To her colleagues, she was “a force!” “She radiated with energy, positivity, and joy that was almost visible.” Co-workers said, “Jannie was one of the most student-centered people I’ve ever had the pleasure of working with.” They reflected on how tirelessly she worked to develop opportunities for student engagement. “She welcomed all students and guided them to become student leaders and engaged citizens.” “She fought passionately to defend the rights of every student and colleague she encountered.”

To students like Jasmine Sanders, “Jannie wasn’t just the Director of Student Life; she was student life. She was the

heartbeat of so much of what made this college feel like a community. She helped create a culture where connection, kindness, and service were at the center of the KVCC student experience.”

“Jannie could make even the most tedious task feel joyful.” When asked to share their favorite memories of Jannie, work friends remembered how she organized a fake snowball fight while working on the Groundhog Day escape room. They remembered singing along to “I Got You, Babe,” belting it out alongside Jannie at full volume, with their arms slung around each other’s

shoulders. Colleagues and students said that when they think of Jannie, they can’t help but smile. They spoke of how brightly her light glowed.

Jannie passed on August 30, 2025, and we have missed her ever since. We miss that we could always find her where a helping hand was needed. We miss just knowing that she was there. Our community will not be the same. And though we grieve our loss, we take comfort in knowing that Jannie’s spirit lives in all of us. Her quick smile is passed on every time we welcome new students and colleagues into our community. Her generosity is honored in our daily interactions with one another in meetings, in hallways, and in classrooms, where we have constant opportunities to appreciate this most special place called KVCC, this place where we put caring for one another before all else. Jannie was caring personified and we are all better for having known her.



*Jannie Durr was a rainbow. She was pure light.*





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The next issue of *KVCC Happenings* will include images from the May 2026 KVCC Commencement