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Vanderheyden Celebrates Graduates



On June 26th, Vanderheyden celebrated the accomplishments of three high school graduates and four eighth-grade students moving on to ninth grade.

More than 150 friends, family and community members gathered to celebrate the graduation from the Richard A. Desrochers Education Center at Vanderheyden. It is a touching and proud event every year. Karen Carpenter Palumbo, President & CEO, was delighted to hand out the certificates to students who have overcome so many obstacles and worked so diligently on their academics. Troy Police Officer Chris Johnson was the guest speaker at the ceremony. Officer Johnson encouraged the graduates and attending students to stay positive, on track and always believe in themselves.

Students were also recognized with awards including:

- Leadership Award
- Mina Mooradian Award

SAVE THE DATE

Vanderheyden 2015
2nd Annual Oktoberfest
Thursday, October 29

6pm to 8pm

Brown's Brewing Company: Troy

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The seven commitments of our

Sanctuary Community:

Non-violence

Emotional intelligence

Social learning

- Academic Improvement Award
- Excellence in Reading Award
- George Chambers Jr. Award

- Open communication
- Growth and change
- Shared governance
- Social responsibility

Board members Laura Dillon, Michael Barrett, James Faranda, James Stone and Chairman, Patrick Hughes attended the event. THANK YOU to Southwest Airlines for hosting a wonderful barbecue at the school for all the graduates and their guests.

The Richard A. Desrochers Educational Center is a Regents accredited 7 -12 grade program by the New York State Department of Education, with capacity for 88 students. All required classes are offered for students to graduate with:

- Regents Diploma
- Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) credential or a
- Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential.

The program provides appropriate teaching for special education students, as well as those who are at risk of not succeeding at school. The program addresses the individual needs of each student.



Thank you to Southwest Airlines for serving and hosting a wonderful BBQ after the ceremony.



Guest speaker at graduation was Officer Chris Johnson of the Troy Police Department giving a very inspirational speech from his personal experience.

Spotlight on Sukina Anderson

"It's All About The Kids"

Direct Care workers are the backbone of any agency that serves children and youth.

Sukina is one of those people at Vanderheyden, a ten-year team member who has a personal investment in the happiness and success of the kids she works with, and the skills to make that happen.

Throughout her decade at Vanderheyden, Sukina has had a lot of opportunity to



learn about what works with young men and women, and what doesn't.

"Consistency," she says, "is what it is all about. They come here from places that don't have it, and they really need it." The theme of consistency is repeated often as Sukina talks about her work.

Sukina spent her first five years at Vanderheyden working overnights at Cottage 3, also known as Polly Cottage. "Sometimes I'd find one of the girls waiting up for me to arrive," says Sukina. "If she'd had a hard day, we'd talk it through so she could go to sleep." Being a good listener is just one of Sukina's skills. She is also a strong proponent of getting her charges to make their own decisions about how best to get out of a corner they may have backed themselves into. To someone who has made a bad decision, she'll ask, "What's your next move?"

After five years, Sukina moved to Bessey House, where currently 6 boys and 4 girls live. Her job includes managing their schedules and ferrying them to school and medical appointments. "I try to make everything an opportunity for learning," she says. "Even sitting in a waiting room is important time spent with our kids."

At Vanderheyden, direct care workers must, on a regular basis, take agency training in areas including CPR/First Aid, Crisis Management, and Fire Safety. Many, like Sukina, choose to increase their skills and compensation by taking additional training available in the community. She recently moved up from Direct Care Worker III to IV by taking five additional trainings in the community and planning an agency event. Her event was a going away party for one of the young men she has mentored during his eight years at Vanderheyden. On her own time, Sukina stays connected with this young man, driving to his group home in Schenectady to take him to the movies or to just hang out. "We are his family," she says.

Clearly Sukina feels like family to many of those she has cared for and mentored over the years. When she is on campus, she greets and is greeted by many cottage residents who know her from her years in Cottage 3. She mentions graduations and weddings and new babies born to former Vanderheyden residents with whom she is still in touch. Apparently, she is famous for her macaroni salad, an often-requested dish when she is invited to events. For the record, she refuses to give up its secret ingredient.

Already Sukina has her sights on moving up to a Level V direct care worker. She is scoping out appropriate training opportunities in the community and for the required event, is planning to take a group of kids on a trip to the Bronx zoo in August.

Fortunately for the youth she works with, Sukina has turned down offers to become a supervisor at Vanderheyden. "For me, it's all about being with the kids. That's what I love to do."



A Successful Fundraiser at Raymour & Flanigan Showrooms in the Capital Region

On June 13th our community partner, [Raymour & Flanigan](#) furniture showrooms in

Clifton Park, Niskayuna and Latham hosted a fundraiser for Vanderheyden. It was a great success and we were able to raise \$3,000 for our health, wellness and therapeutic recreation programs. These programs are so important to the welfare of our youth, individuals and families that we serve.

Special Olympics New York - Summer Games in Brockport

Four of our youth attended the NYS Special Olympics on June 5th. After many months of preparation and training Jon, William, Tim and Lucas participated in the Track competition. The team was supported by Lauren Sirkin, Lauren Finland, and Jamel Anderson who helped them train, obtain appropriate clothing and gear, and cheered them on. Activities coordinator, Lauren Sirkin accompanied the youth to Brockport and came back bursting with pride over the effort and sportsmanship of the Vanderheyden team. "They were so excited the whole time. They made friends with other competitors, gave advice to them, and even took advice from the other athletes. If they did not place first, they were genuinely proud of their fellow athlete that placed above them. Their sportsmanship and team spirit made me proud."



Supporting participation in the Special Olympics is just one of the many ways that Vanderheyden promotes the integration of physical, mental, and emotional health, all of which prepare our youth for success in their families and the community.

We are grateful to the [Fleet Feet](#) in Albany for outfitting our team with high quality athletic shoes.

School Carnival

On June 24th our school's back field was transformed into a school carnival. There were games, prizes, a dunking booth, a bounce house, hamster ball races, cotton candy, popcorn, chip-wiches made with chef Thai's homemade chocolate chip cookies and face painting by our incredibly talented teacher, Ms. Mahar.



This event would not have been possible without the help and support of some local donors and the Vanderheyden team. A special thanks goes out to Stephanie Pelletier, Student Council Advisor, for all her dedication in planning and accomplishing a special event for our students. The American Legion in Wynantskill donated ice for our water bottle station & Stewart's donated make your own sundae kits. A few members of the North Greenbush Police stopped by to join the fun and handed out bonus tickets to students for "random acts of kindness." These tickets were used to play games.

EVERYONE had an absolute BLAST!

Students Achieve CPR Certification

The CPR/FA Class consisted of 4 sessions, each 1.5 hours long. There were 6 individuals certified, which means that they passed physical skill tests consisting of:



- Rolling over an unconscious victim
- Adult CPR
- Conscious Choking (back blows and abdominal thrusts)
- Controlling External Bleeding

Additionally, students learned about checking the scene, responding to emergencies, burns, sudden illnesses, and heat/cold related emergencies.

Spotlight Board Member Dave Fazioli

Vanderheyden relies on a large number of dedicated volunteers and our board members make an especially hefty commitment to our success. Dave Fazioli, our past board president and currently Treasurer, is an executive at Rose & Kiernan and has served in many leadership roles since he began to serve on the Vanderheyden board nearly 15 years ago. We cannot even begin to count the hundreds of hours he has volunteered on our behalf!



Dave has guided Vanderheyden through tough times and celebrates with us when our collective efforts result in successes. A major accomplishment that occurred during Dave's leadership is our certification as a Sanctuary-certified human services provider. "Dave is incredibly supportive," says CEO Karen Carpenter. "He is here for every graduation, every talent show, every event. He is the one who buys uniforms for the team and springs for a television when there is a need. Once when I mentioned I was figuring out how to celebrate an individual's 18th birthday, he invited the young man to have dinner at a local country club. The combination of his business expertise and his personal interest in our youth is a huge plus for our community."

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