

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STATEMENT

Shana Trombley

I grew up in an educated family. My mom earned both bachelor's and master's degrees and worked as a librarian. My dad earned his Ph.D. and was a university professor. Studies show that if your parents attended college, you are more likely to do so too because you grew up with the message that you are "college material" – like your parents before you.

The messages that students get about themselves as "college material" are powerful and they don't only come from your family's history of attending college. My dad died when I was very young and for most of my childhood my mom worked two jobs to support my brother and me. We also received Social Security survivor benefits. These monthly checks helped to keep our small family afloat. The benefits were intended to continue for a child's postsecondary education but shortly before I graduated from high school the Reagan Administration cut postsecondary benefits. I recall my mom saying, "I guess the government assumes that people who get these benefits don't get to go to college."

At The Curtis Fund we aim to create new assumptions – that every Vermonter who wishes to, can obtain a postsecondary education regardless of their family's educational history or economic status. In our 111-year history we have helped more than 11,000 Vermonters achieve a degree or skills certification.

This past academic year The Curtis Fund provided scholarships to 647 students, but we know that we are meeting less than half of the need. Today, The Curtis Fund is working to double the size of our Fund so that we can help every Vermonter seeking a postsecondary degree or certification. We are grateful to have you as our partner as we pursue this critical goal.



647 STUDENTS

served: which includes our 532 traditional scholars (2 and 4 year programs) and 115 Certificate of Value (CoV) scholars.

\$1,543,127

invested in our scholarships. The Curtis Fund invested \$1,387,344 in our traditional scholarships and \$155,783 in CoV.



LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Joe Boutin

One doesn't usually associate a 111-year-old program with the words "flexible" or "innovative" but today these words apply to The Curtis Fund which was founded by Emma Eliza Curtis. She had the foresight to establish a fund for students pursuing a postsecondary education regardless of income. At a time when it wasn't common for women to pursue a postsecondary degree, she specifically wrote them into the picture. Launching our flexibility, Curtis wrote: "Aiding young men and women to obtain a common school or university education, or both, or to learn a trade, handicraft, business or profession..." This inclusive mission has allowed The Curtis Fund to grow to meet the changing needs of today's students.

Today, according to Advance Vermont, 33% of our students are 30 or older, 25% are parents and 80% work – with 25% of them working full-time. These students need flexible programs that can be achieved in a timely and affordable way.

The Curtis Fund has found its next realm of flexibility and innovation. The Credentials of Value (CoV) programs – industry-recognized certifications that allow students to gain the skills and training they need to qualify for high-demand jobs - are the core of our program to establish a scholarship program for students seeking CoVs. Beginning in 2017, our CoV scholarships have targeted "Promising Career" fields, as identified by the McClure Foundation and the Vermont Department of Labor. Aligned with the state's goal of increasing the number of Vermonters with degrees or credentials from 50% today to 70% by 2025, our program started with 16 students and this fall will provide scholarship for about 175 students. Our starting investment of \$25,000 has grown to \$240,000 for the 2021-22 academic year.

This rapid growth is thanks to you – our supporters – who share our belief in this program. I am humbled by your faith in The Curtis Fund and by your generosity. In this year-end report we share the stories of a few of our scholars. I think you'll be as inspired by their intelligence, hard work, and tenacity as I am.

VICKY MILLS

NORTHERN VERMONT UNIVERSITY

Vicky earned her associate degree from CCV last spring and now is pursuing a bachelor's degree at NVU as a hybrid student, which means she takes classes online and in person at any of the four Vermont State Colleges. This program gives Vicky the flexibility she needs to care for her family while pursuing her degree. Vicky returned to school after decades in the workforce. She notes, "As a child I was very alone in my education, with no help or support on my homework. Neither my mom nor brother graduated high school and my dad died when I was young." This lack of early support is now being made up for by her advisors at CCV and NVU who Vicky credits with "...inspiring [her] to keep going."



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LOGAN BAILEY

ADVANCED WELDING INSTITUTE

When Logan Bailey enters the Advance Welding Institute in Burlington this September he will be one of the 175 students receiving a Curtis Fund scholarship to earn a Credential of Value certificate. Logan graduated from Spaulding High School in Barre this past May and represents a growing number of recent high school graduates who are choosing a Credential of Value (CoV) program to achieve their postsecondary education goals. CoV programs prepare students for Vermont's high-demand, high-wage jobs including IT Service Desk Specialist, Licensed Practical Nursing, Computer Coding and Software Development, Graphic Design, and Certified Production Technician – to name a few. Logan says he's interested in becoming an underwater welder and one day hopes to own his own welding business.



IAN BAKER

VERMONT TECHNICAL COLLEGE

This fall Ian Baker will enter his senior year at VTC studying manufacturing engineering technology. He graduated Summa Cum Laude with an associate degree in 2020 and was named VTC Student Engineering Technician that same year. Ian knows how to meet a challenge. He has cerebral palsy and states that "...overcoming challenges is in itself a reward and motivator for me." He credits The Curtis Fund will helping him graduate debt-free and plans to own his own company that prototypes assistive devices that are affordable to your average person.



*Donated to the Jessica Pomerleau-Halnon Credentials of Value Scholarship Fund

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