

05

TRIUMPH OVER ADVERSITY

MATTHEW CUMMINGS

12

**CELEBRATING
60 YEARS**
Rock Valley College

18

**DUAL-SPORT
ATHLETE**
Sam Tourtillott

05

**LOVE, LEGACY,
& LEARNING**
in Respiratory Care

EXPLORE AREAS OF STUDY AT ROCK VALLEY COLLEGE

Whether you're interested in Career & Technical Education designed to be completed in two years or less, or you want to start at RVC and transfer to another college, Rock Valley College has great options for you.

BUSINESS & COMPUTER SCIENCE

- Accounting
- Business Administration
- Computers & Information Systems
- Cybersecurity Specialist
- Network Systems Administration
- Office Professional
- Web Programming & Design

COMMUNICATION & ENGLISH

- English
- Creative Writing
- Journalism
- Literature
- Mass Communication
- Speech Communication

EDUCATION

- Early Childhood Education
- Education (K-12)

ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY

- Apprenticeships
- CNC Machining
- Electronic Engineering Technology
- Engineering Science
- Manufacturing Engineering Technology
- Mechatronics
- Welding

FINE & PERFORMING ARTS

- Art
- Graphic Arts Technology
- Music
- Theatre

HEALTH SCIENCES

- Dental Assistant
- Dental Hygiene
- Emergency Medical Technician
- Fire Science
- Fitness, Wellness, & Sport
- Massage Therapy
- Medical Assistant
- Nursing
- Nursing Aide
- Phlebotomy Technician
- Respiratory Care

SCIENCE & MATH

- Atmospheric Science
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Geology
- Mathematics
- Physical Geography
- Physics

SOCIAL SCIENCE & HUMANITIES

- Anthropology
- Criminal Justice
- Economics
- History
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- Modern Languages
- Philosophy
- Political Science
- Psychology
- Sociology

TRANSPORTATION & LOGISTICS

- Automotive Service Technology
- Aviation Maintenance Technician
- Forklift Operator
- Highway Construction Careers Training Program
- Supply Chain Management
- Truck Driver Training

From dreams...
to your
next
chapter.



RVC is an equal opportunity educator and employer.

As an institution, Rock Valley College is accredited by The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) and is recognized by the Illinois Board of Higher Education and by the Illinois Community College Board. Learn more at RockValleyCollege.edu/About/Consumer-Information/Accreditation

FROM THE PRESIDENT

This fall, Rock Valley College will celebrate 60 years of transforming lives in the Stateline community. It is the highlight of my career to contribute to RVC's legacy as the eighth president of the college. Serving in this role is an honor and privilege I don't take lightly. I am blessed to contribute to this work every day.

Rock Valley College, with student success at its core, is guided by the four pillars of our strategic plan:

ACCESS

Our goal is to improve access to college, training, and careers for our district residents. In 2022, we opened the Advanced Technology Center in Belvidere, and we will open a new facility on Rockford's west side in fall 2026.

EDUCATION

We strive to provide high-quality certificates, degrees, and co-curricular programs – including new offerings like electric vehicle repair, collision repair, and certified medical assistant – to meet the needs of our district.

TRAINING

High-quality training offers opportunities for employees and learners to pursue their educational and career goals. This year, our customized training designed opportunities for 19 business partners in 18 different fields.

DIVERSITY

RVC is committed to a diverse, equitable, and inclusive campus that enhances culture and accessibility. This year, we have renewed our commitment to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), with actions and meaningful initiatives that are reshaping accessibility for all at RVC.

As we move forward, I want to assure you that we will continue to empower students and the community through lifelong learning. Rock Valley College is committed to providing an outstanding learning environment, fostering personal growth, and equipping our students with the skills and knowledge necessary for success in their chosen fields.

We are RVC Strong because our community is strong. Together, we will continue to transform lives in the Stateline area for another 60 years.

Dr. Howard J. Spearman
President, Rock Valley College

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BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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**“MY LEGACY AND
YOURS ARE IN OUR
HANDS WHEN WE
FIRMLY GRASP
OUR DEGREES.”**
– MATTHEW

MATTHEW CUMMINGS TRIUMPH OVER ADVERSITY

Matthew Cummings has faced numerous challenges throughout his life, including being born with cerebral palsy and deafness. Despite these obstacles, Matthew has shown incredible resilience and determination.

OVERCOMING EARLY LIFE CHALLENGES

Matthew's life has been marked by significant health issues. “I have died three times, I have brain damage, I have involuntary movements, and I am deaf,” he said. These disabilities might seem overwhelming to many, but Matthew has never let them hold him back. Instead, he uses his experiences to inspire others, reminding them that despite obstacles, strength and determination can lead to success.

Lynn Shattuck, Director of Disability Support Services, has admired Matthew.

“I’ve met many students over the course of my career here at RVC, but Matthew stands out. He has had more hurdles to overcome than the average student, yet he has a drive and determination that is truly admirable. In a world where it is so easy to feel entitled and find excuses for why things don’t go as planned, Matthew never complains or feels sorry for himself. He just keeps moving forward.”

THE POWER OF POSITIVITY & RESPECT

During his first week at RVC, Matthew made a friend in his Art History class – Olivia. Her acceptance and friendship made a profound impact on Matthew.

“She treated me like a regular college student,” he recalled.

The kindness and support he received from Olivia, along with other classmates and faculty, helped Matthew feel less like a lone wolf and more like a part of a community. From holding doors open to helping fill water bottles, the community at RVC showed Matthew that he wasn’t alone.

“The bottomless compassion paved the way for the community that is so welcoming to be a part of,” Matthew said.

THE 12-YEAR JOURNEY TO BUILDING A LEGACY

Matthew's academic journey was not straightforward. Before RVC, he attended two other colleges, faced employment rejections, and battled depression.

Despite this, he decided it was finally time to finish his education.

While he initially faced numerous challenges getting started at RVC, he never gave up. He found a support system in Disability Support Services and formed a small study group to help him pass his classes.

“There were a few moments where my thoughts weren’t aligned with the professors, but once they understood that I get the same results using different methods, they let me do my thing,” Matthew explained.

Tracy Hazen, Assistant Professor, Communications & Humanities, was impressed with Matthew's dedication to assignments and eagerness to take on challenges. It was an enriching experience to have Matt in her class. He consistently displayed a remarkable eagerness to learn, demonstrating a deep commitment to his education and personal growth.

“What truly stood out was his choice of challenging topics for assignments, showcasing a deep curiosity and a willingness to tackle complex issues head-on. Additionally, the time and effort he put into perfecting his work was exemplary,” shared Tracy.

“Matt wasn’t just about getting things done; he wanted them to be the best they could be. That kind of dedication is rare and truly admirable.”

Matthew's story is not just about overcoming obstacles; it's about building a legacy.

He spent twelve years working towards his goal of graduating, and his perseverance paid off.

“My legacy and yours are in our hands when we firmly grasp our degrees,” Matthew explained.

Matthew Cummings after addressing the Class of 2024 during commencement on Friday, May 17.

LOOKING AHEAD: AN IMPACT IN FILM

“Being an advocate for yourself is one of the most challenging skills that all students face,” shared Cara Vande Voorde, Accommodations Specialist.

“Matt is doing this on a daily basis at RVC, in the community, and in his home environment. At RVC, this means letting staff know what barriers are in his way, like accessibility issues with academic content or communication concerns. Matt is asking each of us at RVC to look outside the box and come up with creative solutions. He is breaking norms and fighting for the life he wants to lead.”

This fall, he plans to return to RVC for the Mass Communication certification program before transferring to Northern Illinois University to major in film. His ultimate goal is to work in the film industry, using his experiences and knowledge to make a meaningful impact.

As Matthew reflects on his time at RVC, he expresses deep gratitude for the community that supported him. “Compared to the other two colleges, the support system here (Professors, faculty, and even students!) has been so kind and open,” shared Matthew. “I felt I could do anything here!”

Matthew's journey is a powerful reminder that with hard work and determination, anything is possible.



RVC HEADLINERS

RVC EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AWARDS

Theresa Paulette Gilbert
Faculty of the Year



Rachel St. John
Rookie of the Year



Amy Heilman
Employee of the Year



Dr. Lisa Mehlig
Leader of the Year



DR. OAKES: NATIONAL FELLOWSHIP

Dr. Mathew Oakes was one of five individuals selected nationally to be a Campus Compact Community College Research Fellow.

HSI

RVC EARNs THE DESIGNATION OF HISPANIC SERVING INSTITUTION (HSI)

This prestigious designation is given to institutions where Hispanic students make up over 25% of the total enrollment. With this recognition, RVC joins the ranks of 34 HSIs in Illinois, half of which are community colleges.

2023 DISTINGUISHED ALUMNUS: BING LIU

Bing Liu, a 2008 graduate of RVC and an Emmy and Oscar-nominated Film Director, received a nomination for this significant honor for his ability to connect with audiences through his storytelling. Through his films, notably "Minding the Gap," Bing touches on sensitive, important subjects that resonate deeply with audiences worldwide.

2023 ATHLETICS HALL OF FAME



Darin Monroe
Softball Coach



Morgan Adolph
Softball



Tierra McGowan
Basketball



Abby Jenkins
Volleyball Coach



2024 EAGLE AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

Outstanding Student

- Gianna Lobato
- Jazmine Nathan
- Nori Barnes

Outstanding Staff

- Christopher Brady
- Lamis Diab
- Cierra Morris

Outstanding Faculty

- Brian Wagner
- William "Bill" Isham
- John Skupien

Outstanding Community Partner

- Get Connected, Tretara Flowers
- Rockford Area Habitat for Humanity

Theresa Paulette Gilbert Distinguished Service Award

- Dr. Amy Diaz

2024-25 RVC STUDENT TRUSTEE: NICO MIKOS

Nico Mikos was elected in April 2024 to serve as the 2024-25 RVC Student Trustee.

MARKETING WINS NATIONAL AWARD

Brent Jepsen, Multimedia Content Creator, earned an NCMPR Silver Paragon Award for his 2023 Graduation Sizzle Reel.

RAISE PROGRAM RECEIVES \$14,630 GRANT

On behalf of Rock Valley College, the Rock Valley College Foundation received a \$14,630 grant for the Raising Aspirations through an Inclusive Student Experience (RAISE) program. Awarded through the Ralph A. and Mildred Johnson Fund of the Community Foundation of Northern Illinois, it allowed for the recent purchase of curriculum upgrades aimed at further empowering students with intellectual disabilities.



ILLINOIS STUDENT VETERAN OF THE YEAR: RYAN RUSSELL

Ryan Russell, a 2023 graduate of RVC, was named Illinois Student Veteran of the Year by the Illinois Department of Veteran Affairs (IDVA) and the Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH). This is the fourth award year and the first community college recipient.

RUNNING START TO SUCCESS

MARGARET TORIO

Margaret Torio's journey at RVC began through Running Start.

This program allows select, academically-motivated students at participating high schools the opportunity to earn their high school diploma and associate's degree concurrently by attending RVC full-time during their junior and senior years.

Despite not knowing what to expect, Margaret described her experience at RVC as life-changing.

As an immigrant, it was initially a struggle for Margaret to adapt to her new environment, including language barriers, cultural differences, and other obstacles.

When she was in high school, meeting people with the same interests as hers was a challenge, making it hard to make friends.

"When I arrived at RVC, the community was so diverse that any of your interests could be filled by student organizations. Clubs that I got involved in made me feel so welcome that I treat them as my second family, and it is also where I have met lifelong friends."

At RVC, Margaret grew personally and professionally. She took on leadership roles, including President of the Running Start Club, President of the Campus Activities Board (CAB), Homecoming Queen 2023, and a leading Brand Ambassador – all of which contributed to her future career and goals.

"Margaret showed remarkable dedication to her studies, social media branding, and helping others flourish. She consistently demonstrated an exceptional work ethic, a strong sense of responsibility, and a keen ability to lead by example," said Sheila Ogbevire, Student Activities Coordinator.

Margaret's experience at RVC was transformative. She appreciated the professors who make connecting and understanding course materials easy.

"The faculty are the best; they make the campus lively and filled with events every month. I love that they consider the students' well-being and find ways to make us enjoy our time at RVC," shared Margaret.

Challenges are a part of every educational journey, and for Margaret, it was adjusting her standards and expectations from high school to college. In college, she learned the value of putting in extra effort to succeed.

Her advice to fellow students is to get involved, be present, and be open-minded.

"Margaret exemplifies what it means to be a member of the RVC community. Whether through her unwavering work ethic, deep commitment to academic excellence, or active involvement in extracurricular activities, Margaret consistently demonstrates exceptional dedication," said Taylor Honeyman, D100 Early College Coordinator and Transition Advisor. "Margaret's drive and determination set a remarkable example for her peers, showcasing the true spirit of being a Golden Eagle."

Margaret will transfer to a four-year university in the fall to pursue a bachelor's degree.



KERVIN THOMAS

LOST RECORDS, FOUND FUTURE

Kervin Thomas faced many challenges on his journey to the United States from Grenada. Upon his arrival, he faced a daunting obstacle: his school records were lost to fire and hurricanes, leaving him unable to prove his high school graduation.

FINDING GUIDANCE

Soon, he connected with retired instructor Pat Young who encouraged him to get his GED here at RVC.

Kervin was initially concerned with the cost as other GED programs proved to be very expensive. The registration window was already closed, but Pat figured out a way to get him in the program.



PURSUING A PASSION

After achieving his GED, Kervin opted to pursue a media production certificate at RVC, driven by his interest in audio and video production, as well as photography. This drive led him to establish his own small business.

"I have a podcast production company, a media production company, a small one," Kervin explained. "I collaborate with organizations in the Rockford area, assisting them in starting podcasts and other media ventures. I provide equipment and set up the acoustics for their rooms, all thanks to the skills acquired through my media production certificate. Working alongside instructors such as Dr. Steven Taddei and Kyle Owens for video has been invaluable."

Dr. Taddei reflected on Kervin's time in the Mass Communication Department. "Kervin is one of those unique individuals who is both selflessly kind and highly talented. He was an insightful student, always willing to learn, and he continues to impress with his personal and professional growth."

Looking ahead, Kervin is determined to continue his education, aiming for both an undergraduate degree and a master's degree. With RVC's affordability and extensive scholarship opportunities, he feels confident in pursuing his dreams without the burden of debt.

"RVC has helped in major ways. Firstly, the [RVC Foundation] scholarships offered allowed me to take classes with no worries. Secondly, the hybrid classes allowed me to still work full time and complete my degree." – Kervin Thomas

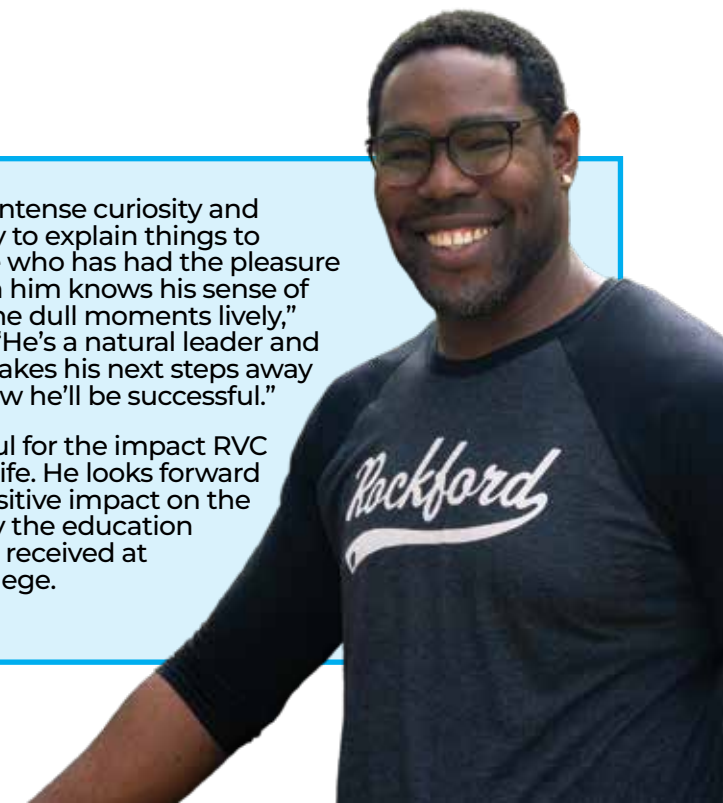
EXPLORING NEW INTERESTS

Kervin also found a passion in Acoustic Ecology, a field that combined his love for nature and audio production. Classes like Plants and Society and Audio Production fueled his curiosity, while his instructors encouraged his growth.

Kervin completed an independent research project with Dr. Megan Pease, examining the impact of burning on invasive plants like Queen Anne's Lace. This hands-on experience deepened his understanding and ignited his enthusiasm for environmental science.

"Kervin has an intense curiosity and compelling way to explain things to people. Anyone who has had the pleasure of working with him knows his sense of humor keeps the dull moments lively," said Dr. Pease. "He's a natural leader and teacher. As he takes his next steps away from RVC, I know he'll be successful."

Kervin is grateful for the impact RVC has had on his life. He looks forward to making a positive impact on the world, fueled by the education and support he received at Rock Valley College.



RVC ALUMNI WAYS TO CONNECT

Whether you graduate from Rock Valley College or simply take a few classes to further your education, you are an important member of the RVC family. The **Rock Valley College Alumni Network** strives to create opportunities for you to reconnect, engage, network, and grow alongside the college and your fellow Golden Eagles. Explore the many ways to stay connected:



JOIN & FOLLOW

CONNECT ON SOCIAL

- Rock Valley College Alumni LinkedIn Group
- Rock Valley College Alumni Facebook Page

UPDATE PREFERENCES
by emailing us at RVC-Foundation@RockValleyCollege.edu



ATTEND & PARTICIPATE

ATTEND ANNUAL EVENTS
Each spring and fall we host a complimentary Alumni & Retiree Breakfast.

LOOK FOR NEW EVENTS
Follow us on Facebook for alumni happy hours and networking opportunities!

Save the date as we celebrate RVC's 60th Anniversary!



SHARE YOUR STORY

READ OUR NEWSLETTER
Our quarterly e-newsletter features RVC spotlight stories – consider sharing your story with us!

COMPLETE THE ALUMNI SURVEY
To fill out the survey, visit RockValleyCollege.edu/Foundation or scan the QR code:



ALUMNI, SAVE THE DATE

Join us for the **RVC Golden Eagles Family Luncheon** as we celebrate RVC's 60th Anniversary!

October 17 • 11:30 AM
RVC Main Campus
Stenstrom Student Center Atrium

We invite you to enjoy a nostalgic journey through RVC's Eras as we honor our past and look forward to a bright future together. There is no cost to attend.

Interested in attending? Contact the RVC Foundation at RVC-Foundation@RockValleyCollege.edu. An email invitation will be sent to local alumni in the near future.



RockValleyCollege.edu/Foundation

BUILDING FUTURES TOGETHER THE POWER OF GIVING

At Rock Valley College, we believe success is contagious. Every day, we witness this firsthand as our students achieve their dreams with resources provided through opportunities like our annual giving campaign.

FROM DOUBTS TO DEGREES

Take José, for example – a dedicated student in our Advanced Mechatronics program. Despite early doubts about his ability to pursue higher education, José's commitment to his daughters' futures became his driving force. With help from resources like RVC Foundation scholarships and the ATC tuition assistance program, José remained a committed and successful student at RVC throughout his first year. Now, he continues toward his goal of obtaining his associates degree. Inspired by his success, José's daughters now also aspire to attend college.

José's journey is just one of many stories illustrating the impact donations to the RVC Foundation can have. Support of the RVC Fund for Immediate Impact can:

- Support day-to-day operations and scholarships
- Cover tuition costs for deserving students
- Provide essential resources like food assistance and textbooks

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Would you join RVC faculty, staff, and donors today with a gift to the **RVC Fund for Immediate Impact** in support of student success at Rock Valley College? Your annual gifts to the RVC Fund may allow our students to launch their journey of learning and discovery that will not only transform their own lives, but may also serve as a motivator for their families, friends, and neighbors who are watching and hoping one day to accomplish the same.

Together, we can ensure that success remains contagious throughout our campuses and that a quality education is made accessible to all who seek a bright future!



DONATE TODAY

Scan the QR code or visit RockValleyCollege.edu/Foundation to learn more!



GOLDEN EAGLES BOOSTER CLUB

Help us enhance our student-athletes' experience!

Be a part of an inclusive community of parents, athletes, alumni, and supporters dedicated to academic and athletic success. Your membership funds scholarships, travel for competitions, school spirit initiatives, and facility enhancements.

Submit your dues now to ensure your membership and support for the upcoming year. Together, we can soar twice as high!



To learn more, scan the QR code!

RockValleyCollege
FOUNDATION

ROCK VALLEY COLLEGE CELEBRATING 60 YEARS



1965 – OPENING DAY

Classes began on Sept. 29, but none of the classes were held on Mulford Road where the RVC Main Campus currently resides. Pictured: National Guard Armory.



1967 – MAIN CAMPUS

The groundbreaking for CLI, CLII, and later the ERC, PEC, and Student Center took place over the course of five years, shaping what is now our Main Campus.



1975 – PROM VENUE

Throughout the years, the Student Center at Main Campus was sought after as a prom venue for area high schools. Pictured: East High School.



1995 – GOLDEN EAGLES

The College transitioned from the Trojans (colors brown and gold) to the Golden Eagles (colors blue and gold).



2017 – HSC OPENS

RVC partnered with Saint Anthony College of Nursing to open the Health Sciences Center (HSC) to hold health programs.



2022 – MOVE TO DII

RVC transitioned to the NJCAA DII level and holds several regional and national championships; allowing for athletic scholarships.

1967 – STARLIGHT ARRIVES

Billed as “the first all-community musical,” a group of RVC students came together to perform *Finian’s Rainbow*. This became the first of many Starlight Theatre performances.



1971 – RVC ACCREDITATION

In April of 1971, Rock Valley College became accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges, which is now the Higher Learning Commission.



1986 – TECH CENTER

The groundbreaking for the RVC Tech Center, now known as the Woodward Technology Center, took place in May of 1986.



2011 – JACOBS CENTER

The Karl J. Jacobs Center for Science and Math (JCSM) honors RVC’s longest serving president, holding science and math labs/classrooms.



2022 – RVC IN BELVIDERE

The Advanced Technology Center (ATC) houses many of RVC’s manufacturing, technology, and industrial-based programs.



Note: This timeline features select highlights from our college’s 60-year history. It does not encompass all events and milestones.

A NEW ERA BEGINS

RVC DOWNTOWN WEST



(Photo by Kevin Haas/Rock River Current)

ROCK VALLEY COLLEGE

DOWNTOWN WEST UPDATE

RVC is in the preliminary stages of planning a Downtown West campus located at Chestnut and Winnebago/Rockton. We are excited to expand our offerings to better serve the western portion of our college district.

The programs housed at this location will include:

- Automotive
- Electric Vehicles
- Collision Repair
- Early Childhood Education
- Refugee & Immigration Services
- Truck Driver Training
- Human Services
- Criminal Justice
- Adult Education

Estimated Timeline:

- Fall 2024: Demo three buildings
- Winter 2024-25: Expected completion of demo
- Spring 2025: Groundbreaking Ceremony
- August 2026: Construction will be complete

For more information, visit RockValleyCollege.edu/Projects

CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2024

TIJUANA GLASS FROM SETBACKS TO SUCCESS

Despite facing numerous challenges, including dropping out of high school and losing her sight at a young age, Tijuana Glass never gave up on her dream of earning her GED.

In 2004, amidst personal trials, Tijuana welcomed her son Augustus into the world, adding another layer of responsibility to her plate. Three years later, she faced yet another setback with a cancer diagnosis. Times were challenging, but thankfully she has been completely healed of cancer.

Eventually, Tijuana made the decision to complete her high school diploma. "In November of 2016, though incredibly nervous, I made a call to Rock Valley College Disability Support Services to inquire about GED classes," said Tijuana. "I decided to finally go for it, and I started classes soon after."

Tijuana found invaluable support and resources at RVC to aid her in her journey. With tools like the JAWS computer screen reader and a talking calculator, she embarked on her educational path with renewed hope.

"It took the 'village' of Adult Education and RVC to make Tijuana's dream happen," shared Linda Scherbarth, Adult Education & Literacy Instructor, "as Tijuana was the first blind student to pursue a GED program at RVC."

"The frustrations, the heartaches, and the roadblocks we faced were so much easier with Tijuana's continuous positive attitude."

Linda supported Tijuana with unwavering encouragement and personalized tutoring. She went above and beyond, visiting Tijuana at her home to provide additional support and created tactile learning materials.

Tijuana tackled each subject, but struggled with math. After several attempts, Tijuana faced her math test once again and, on July 11, 2023, achieved her long-awaited goal of earning her GED and high school diploma.

Tricia D. Wagner, Director of Adult Education proudly reflected on Tijuana's accomplishments. "We often say, in Adult Education, that we believe in our students before they believe in themselves. With Tijuana, this was not the case. She, along with all of us, knew that she could realize this remarkable accomplishment. It was only a matter of time."

Tijuana was a speaker for the GED Completion Ceremony on May 16, 2024, sharing advice with the graduates:

"Even when times get hard, try harder. Do your best, do not give up."



Empowering students and community through lifelong learning.

HOME OF CHAMPIONS

For athletics information, visit RVCsports.com.

DUAL-SPORT GOLDEN EAGLE SAM TOURTILLOTT

Sam Tourtillott chose Rock Valley College for its welcoming atmosphere and the opportunity to excel in basketball and softball.

Initially recruited by Coach Darryl Watkins for women's basketball, she was later given the chance to

play both sports by Darin Monroe, Athletic Director & Head Coach.

Her sophomore year was particularly memorable as she **competed in nationals** for both sports. For basketball, the team entered as the undefeated #3 seed, expected to dominate. For softball, they were the #13 seed; underdogs who managed to pull off significant upsets. These experiences, shared with teammates who had amazing chemistry, are ones she cherishes.

Coach Monroe acknowledged that being a college athlete in one sport is tough and for two years Sam made the commitment to being a **part of two nationally-recognized programs in basketball and softball at RVC.**

"She was able to participate in 3 NJCAA National Tournaments while being a member of these sports. Sam flourished on the softball field and capped it off with our first Top 10 finish at the NJCAA D2 National Tournament in May, while also being recognized as our 1st ever NJCAA D2 All-American," shared Coach Monroe.

However, Sam's journey has not been without its obstacles.

Last fall, she suffered a severe injury while playing softball, breaking her collarbone in three places, and sustaining a concussion. Her recovery process involved surgery and eight weeks of rest, during which she was eager to return.

Even while sidelined, she learned valuable lessons about the game, gaining a new perspective by watching and adapting. "It was definitely a challenge," she shared, "but I learned a lot more sitting on the sidelines than I have playing."

Coach Watkins is proud of Sam's continued commitment and dedication as a student-athlete.

"Sam made a choice when she committed to Rock Valley – a choice to commit to excellence. Being a dual-sport athlete isn't just about trying to master sets of skills in completely different sports, but it's about the relentless pursuit of perfection," explained Coach Watkins. "Sam was a part of the first Women's Basketball program to finish the regular season with a 30-0 record while also helping the program reach heights of 34 wins which is the most ever."

Reflecting on her time at RVC, Sam acknowledged how far she's come. Her advice to prospective students is simple: get involved. Engage with classmates, join clubs, and create new friendships.

"RVC is a community, but you must make the effort to join it."

Sam plans to enter the nursing program at Rock Valley College.



All fall sports secured Regional Championship titles.



RVC Women's Basketball had its first undefeated regular season, finished top 10 at nationals, and set a program record of 34 wins.



Our college mascot Arvee received a fresh, brand new look this spring.



RVC Men's & Women's Bowling Teams earned the 2024 NJCAA National Championship titles.



STENSTROM FAMILY LEGACY OF GENEROSITY

In the early 2000s, the Stenstrom family left a mark on Rock Valley College with a remarkable donation leading to the naming of the Stenstrom Center for Career Education on Samuelson Road.

Fast forward to 2023, with an ownership change of that center, the College relocated the family's name to the Stenstrom Student Center on its Main Campus.

RVC President Dr. Howard Spearman shared his gratitude for the Stenstrom Family's commitment to RVC, "The ripple effect of what they do to support so many students at RVC, and their willingness to be a living legacy, is priceless."

At the helm of this legacy is Bob Stenstrom, who has served on the RVC Foundation board for over 25 years, currently serving as the board president.

"Jan and I have focused our giving on Rock Valley College because we believe in the power of post-secondary education and training. In our chosen field of construction, we know that the buildings of the future can only be built with the hands and minds of a highly skilled workforce. We believe a gift to Rock Valley College is not just an investment in the future of the individual students we support, it is truly an investment in the future of our entire community."



Left to right: Bobby, Bob, and Jan Stenstrom, and Christie Jarrett.

The Stenstrom Family has also provided countless students with the opportunity to pursue their education. Through scholarships, they remove financial barriers that exist for many of our students.

"To many, your Stenstrom name on this building will most likely reflect your family's charitable gifts to the college," said Brittany Freiberg, RVC Foundation Chief Development Officer. "But for some of us, we see more than just philanthropy behind that name. We see opportunity for promising futures. We see access for those that wouldn't have it otherwise. We see wisdom, leadership, civic responsibility, family values, and a deep passion for education."

Rock Valley College is honored to recognize and celebrate the Stenstrom family's legacy and the long-lasting impact of their charitable contributions on our students' lives and throughout our community.



STUDENTS SHINE IN NATIONAL CYBER LEAGUE COMPETITION

This year, RVC Computer and Information Systems students competed in the National Cyber League (NCL) Competition.

The NCL, powered by Cyber Skyline, is a virtual, learning-centered cybersecurity competition designed to bridge the gap from curriculum to careers. This competition is held once each semester and is open to college and high school students.

"In the realm of cybersecurity, success is not just about technical prowess, but also about adaptability, critical thinking, and a relentless pursuit of excellence. Our students' remarkable achievements in the National Cyber League Competition reflect their dedication, resilience, and passion for this field," shared Stephanie Wascher. **"I am incredibly proud of their accomplishments and confident in their ability to thrive in the ever-evolving landscape of cybersecurity."**



Left to right: Kristina Krist, Rob Samoraj, Dylan Gerig-Carlson, Corey Hirsch, and Jailah Campbell.

Students had to identify hackers from forensic data, pen test and audit vulnerable websites, recover from ransomware attacks, and more. Schools are ranked based on their top team performance, their top student's individual performance, and the aggregate individual performance of their students.

The NCL competition uses a system called badging to help individuals and teams track their performance. The Medal Badges issued by NCL consist of a division and a tier, which together represents an individual or team's percentile score in a game. There are five divisions: Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum, and Diamond. Within each division are four tiers. They are represented as a numeric value starting from 4 (being the lowest) to 1 (being the highest).

RVC students placed throughout the top four divisions: **Corey Hirsch** earned a DIAMOND-1 Medal, **Robert Samoraj** earned a PLATINUM-1 Medal, **Kristina Krist** earned a PLATINUM-3 Medal, **Jaereth Anderson** earned a GOLD-2 Medal, **Jailah Campbell** earned a SILVER-1 Medal, and **Eric Patterson** earned a SILVER-1 Medal.

The six were joined by an additional student, **Dylan Gerig-Carlson**, and competed in the team competition, finishing 96th out of 4,199 Teams.

Overall, RVC ranked 49th Nationally out of 476 Colleges and Universities and 15th in the Central United States in the Cyber Power Rankings. Congratulations to our CIS team!

RELATED PROGRAMS

- Computers & Information Systems (CIS)
- Cybersecurity Specialist
- Network System Administration
- Web Programming & Design

STUDENT SUCCESS TESTIMONIAL

"I was able to discover aspects and skills which I was not aware of before. The team worked amazingly hard throughout the season to get us closer to success and higher in the rankings. Since participating, my passion for cybersecurity and the program has increased tremendously and made me want to further my education and career in the field."

– Jailah Campbell

NATIONAL RECOGNITION



Rock Valley College has been designated as a National Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense (CAE-CD) by the National Security Agency (NSA) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

Learn more at RockValleyCollege.edu/academics/programs/cybersecurity-center

A STORY OF LOVE, LEGACY, & LEARNING IN RESPIRATORY CARE

RVC Trustee Robert “Bob” Trojan knows firsthand the profound impact that respiratory therapists have on their patients.

His beloved late wife, Norma, suffered from COPD. During her time in hospice care, Bob witnessed the dedication and compassion of respiratory therapists who helped improve her quality of life in her final months.

The 2024 RVC Respiratory Pinning Ceremony holds a deep significance for Bob. In memory of Norma, who passed away in 2021, he established a scholarship in Norma’s name through the RVC Foundation in support of respiratory care students.

At the 2024 ceremony, Bob had the honor of seeing Crystal Robles, the first recipient of Norma’s scholarship, receive her pin and complete the program.



“I’m so proud, and I know Norma would be, too, that Crystal is the first recipient of this scholarship. I applaud all 16 Respiratory Care graduates. It is a noble profession that exists to help people, and I think they have chosen wisely.”
– Bob

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