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**The Vermont  
Presidential Scholars  
Awards Ceremony**

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**The Vermont State House**

January 2024

## Agenda

- 4:45 – 5:15 Refreshments in State House Cafeteria
- 5:30 – 6:30 Awards Ceremony in House Chambers
- Welcome
  - Vermont Presidential Scholars in the Arts
  - Vermont Presidential Scholars in Career Technical Education (CTE)
  - Vermont Presidential Scholars in the General Category
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## The Arts

This year, there are five Presidential Scholars in the Arts and four Honorable Mentions, selected from 25 nominations from arts programs across the state. All nominees demonstrated key qualities, showcasing the drive, ingenuity, and dedication of art students throughout Vermont. The Presidential Scholars in the arts were chosen for their commitment, artistic achievements, passion, growth, pursuit of artistic goals, and overall excellence.

## Honorable Mention

### **Kaeleb Berthiaume (North Country Union High School)**

Kaeleb is a remarkable individual whose exceptional self-awareness and exemplary leadership make him a standout student in the arts. Throughout his high school journey, he has demonstrated an unparalleled ability to contribute creatively to his school community. Serving as co-captain for the NCUHS Dance Company for three years, Kaeleb exhibits strong leadership in the dance classroom, treating everyone with kindness and respect. Beyond school, he not only attends but also teaches classes at a local dance studio. Notably, during his sophomore year, Kaeleb initiated Teen and Adaptive Dance classes, showcasing his commitment to inclusivity and mentorship. As a versatile artist, he excels as a dancer, actor, and musician, always eager to expand his skills. Kaeleb's initiative goes beyond performance – he co-founded the first Spring Cabaret at his school, demonstrating his organizational prowess and dedication to promoting the performing arts. He extends his passion for arts education by hosting productions and fundraisers, such as a dance recital benefiting a local family dealing with a rare disease. Kaeleb's positivity, energy, and advocacy for others create an inspiring atmosphere. Applying to various schools and programs, he aspires to gain diverse experiences fostering creative pathways beyond his small-town community. With dreams of moving to New York City, Kaeleb seeks to make connections and explore the limitless possibilities the performing arts world has to offer. His genuine love for the arts, combined with his unwavering commitment to community and inclusivity, sets Kaeleb apart as a truly exceptional individual in the arts.

### **Ezra Goss (Lyndon Institute)**

Ezra, a junior in high school, stands out as a dedicated and passionate artist with an insatiable appetite for creativity. Although unsure about his future profession or college plans, Ezra's unwavering commitment to art is crystal clear—he simply wants to keep doing art and continually improve. His generosity in sharing his artistic talents, such as gifting an exquisite still life in oil to the high school CCC office, reflects his genuine love for the craft. Ezra's exploration of diverse artistic mediums has opened up new worlds for him, allowing him not only to find inspiration in the works of other artists but also to analyze and incorporate various processes into his own creations. His keen eye for detail and patience set him apart, evident in his meticulous projects, such as the near-photographic realism of thick rope, a bird nest, a reflective vessel, and cow skulls. Ezra's achievements, including winning Best of Show in the Federal Junior Duck Stamp Program of Vermont with his depiction of a female merganser, underscore his exceptional talent. Despite having only one period of Advanced Art at school, Ezra dedicates double the time, utilizing free periods to invest extra effort into his work. A true student of art, he has

explored drawing, watercolor, acrylic, oil, and ceramics, showcasing his eagerness to embrace diverse artistic forms. Ezra's dedication, artistic versatility, and commitment to continual learning make him a standout presence in the world of art.

### **Charli Kellaway (North Country Union High School)**

Charli, a junior in high school, embodies a lifelong commitment to the arts, showcasing extraordinary talents since childhood. Balancing a stellar 4.0 GPA with active participation in voice lessons, dance, and theatrical productions, Charli excels not only academically but also in select choir, band, and all-state festivals, displaying versatility as a soccer star. With over 80 productions to her credit, including standout roles like Miss Honey in "Matilda" and "The Addams Family," Charli's triple-threat status – vocal range, dance modalities, and acting prowess – exemplifies her dedication to the arts. Recognized as the Sheer Elite International National Miss Vickie Sheer award recipient, she extends her impact as student council president, captain of the soccer team, and VT state Choreographer of the Year. Charli's leadership transcends the stage, involving herself in community initiatives, volunteer work, and dance teaching for local youth. As she anticipates her collegiate journey in Musical Theatre and Dance, Charli's inspiring commitment to the arts, sports, and academics encourages peers to dream and excel in their pursuits.

### **Hailey Messier (Essex High School)**

Hailey, a high school junior, is a shining example of artistic excellence, particularly on the bassoon and piano. Her initiative and talent were evident when, as a sophomore, she earned a Vermont All State Scholarship on bassoon, impressing adjudicators with a memorized classical performance. Hailey's musical prowess extends beyond her school's band program; she plays with the Vermont Youth Orchestra and was selected to perform with the University of Vermont Symphony Orchestra. A skilled pianist, she has achieved notable recognition, including a Paderewski Medal from the National Guild of Piano Teachers. Hailey's dedication to the arts is exemplified by her active involvement in the school's Tri-M music honor society, where she overcame scheduling challenges to serve as co-president, demonstrating leadership and perseverance. Beyond her musical achievements, Hailey participates in various extracurricular activities, including National Honor Society, Student Government, and Scholar's Bowl. Despite her diverse commitments, Hailey finds solace in the arts, using music as a source of comfort and inspiration. Looking ahead, she aspires to secure a senior solo with the Vermont Youth Orchestra while pursuing a career in the medical field. Hailey's ability to balance artistic passion, academic excellence, and leadership positions showcases her as a remarkable individual excelling in both the arts and her broader aspirations.

## **Presidential Scholars in the Arts**

### **Lily Hutcheson (Burr and Burton Academy)**

With a remarkable passion for the arts, Lily has been excelling in writing, theater, and film since a young age. Winning third prize in the Cricket Magazine poetry contest at nine years old marked the beginning of an impressive journey. Lily's creative process has been a source of inspiration, fostering a commitment to share their story and represent those whose stories need to be shared. Achievements include being a national semifinalist in prestigious playwriting festivals, winning regional awards, and earning a silver medal for poetry at the national level. Beyond accolades, this aspiring artist actively contributes to their school's artistic community, co-executive producing the New Works Festival and participating in various theater events. Their dedication extends to mentoring, supporting first-year students, and serving as a student ambassador and communications director for the Student Council. In the wider community, they've contributed to camps and served as a Community Leader for the Vermont Young Writers project. Applying to colleges with strong arts programs, they aspire to continue studying and creating in writing, theater, and film, with hopes of becoming a television writer. Their deep desire to connect through art and celebrate resilient female characters showcases a profound commitment to the arts, community, and storytelling.

### **Greta Ketterling (*Burlington Technical Center*)**

Greta's journey through high school has been shaped by resilience, creativity, and an unwavering commitment to the arts. Greta discovered her passion for art in AP Studio Art at Burlington High School. Channeling her experiences into highly detailed and personal drawings, Greta found solace and expression in her creations, earning a remarkable 5 on her AP Studio Art portfolio. Her artistic journey expanded with a transformative trip to Japan, where she explored Buddhist temples and found inspiration for her work. Greta's own experiences has influenced her exploration of girlhood and womanhood, evident in her stylistic choices, pastel colors, and feminine imagery. Beyond visual arts, Greta is the creative lead and editor-in-chief of Burlington High School's literary magazine, "Detour," where she introduces a fashion feature and oversees the layout process. Looking ahead, Greta aspires to attend art school, collaborate across disciplines, and create immersive installations that blend sound and visual art. Her vision extends to journalism and publications, where she aims to amplify marginalized community perspectives. Greta's artistic journey is a testament to her strength, creativity, and dedication to creating meaningful connections through her craft.

### **Apolina Mbeleci (*Burlington Technical Center/Winooski High School*)**

Apolina's journey into the realm of photography at Winooski High School has been nothing short of extraordinary, reflecting her innate talent, commitment to community, identity, and faith. Despite embarking on her photographic endeavors only in her junior year, Apolina quickly distinguished herself with a unique eye for composition, shadows, and highlights. Her photos exhibited a profound connection with her subjects, capturing a sense of confidence and security. Apolina's work garnered widespread recognition, earning her accolades at regional and national levels, including a prestigious American Visions award. Notably, her involvement in collaborative projects, such as the Unheard Stories initiative and AALV filmmaking club, underscores her dedication to dispelling stereotypes and fostering a deeper understanding of African experiences in Vermont. Beyond her artistic achievements, Apolina has emerged as a leader in various youth groups, city projects, and online prayer groups, showcasing her commitment to community engagement and personal growth. Apolina's recent acceptance into the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) is a testament to her remarkable development as a photographer and her ability to transcend the boundaries of her prior understanding, all while remaining rooted in her faith and the communities she serves. The future holds great promise for Apolina as she continues to explore the intersection of art, identity, and spirituality, leaving an indelible mark on the artistic landscape.

### **Callum Robechek (*Montpelier High School*)**

Callum is an outstanding musician with a remarkable aptitude for multiple instruments and a passion for composition. Starting piano lessons at the age of 6, he has expanded his repertoire to include percussion, viola, voice, and jazz piano. Beyond being an accomplished instrumentalist and vocalist, Callum has ventured into self-taught music production and composition. Notably, his compositions have been featured in performances by prestigious ensembles like the Vermont Philharmonic and Vermont Symphony Orchestra and Choir. His commitment to his craft is evident in the initiative he demonstrates daily, fearlessly tackling large projects and always seeking opportunities for growth. Callum's accomplishments include winning the Composition Scholarship Award for the All State Music Festival, where he conducted his original composition, "Mundus Soni," with a symphony orchestra he assembled. Despite his young age, Callum's musical journey has already earned him acclaim, yet he remains humble and collaborative. He actively participates in various musical contexts, from classical performances to jazz drums, solo guitar, and voice. Callum's versatility extends to collaborating on arrangements for a UVM choir, producing for singer-songwriter friends, and contributing to his award-winning pop band, "The Radiance." His aspirations center around musical versatility and personal artistry, driven by a desire to explore, connect artistic mediums, and create innovative sounds. With an unwavering dedication to music as a source of comfort, empowerment, and challenge, Callum envisions a future marked by continuous exploration and inspiration in the realm of artistry.

### **Josie Rowell (*Lyndon Institute*)**

Josie Rowell is an exceptional dancer and aspiring dance educator, showcasing an unparalleled dedication to her craft. Her goal of opening her own dance studio reflects her commitment to sharing the joy of dance education

with others. Josie's impact is profound, evident in her teaching role at Dance Express, where she collaborates on class material and choreography. At Lyndon Institute, her influence extends to performances, assemblies, and community engagement, where she actively contributes to the dance program's growth. Josie's involvement in the National Honor Society for Dance Arts demonstrates her commitment to advocating for dance education, evident in letters to administration and initiatives promoting the art form. Her growth in communication skills, patience, and adaptability is a testament to her thriving creative and reflective processes. Josie's journey from an introverted student to a mature, confident young woman emphasizes her transformative experience with dance. As a performer, Josie captivates audiences with her maturity, clarity, and commitment to communication through dance. Her determination is evident in her involvement with Burklyn Ballet Theater, internships, and the successful coordination of a dance summer program. Ms. Rowell's exemplary work ethic, leadership, and compassion extend beyond the classroom, positioning her as a positive force in the community. Josie Rowell's unique blend of talent, commitment, and community engagement makes her one of the most outstanding students in the Lyndon Institute dance department, paving the way for a promising future in dance education and studio management.

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## Career Technical Education (CTE)

This year there are five Career Technical Education (CTE) Presidential Scholars and two Honorable Mentions. These students were chosen from 22 nominations from CTE centers and programs across the state. All the nominees showed examples of these important qualities and reflect the drive, ingenuity, and dedication of CTE students across the state of Vermont. CTE Presidential Scholars were chosen based on their ingenuity, creativity and problem-solving; employability skills; technical competence; and academic rigor.

## Honorable Mention

### **Cooper Joseph Hodgeman (North Country Career Center)**

Through diligent work in his CTE program, Cooper is on track to pass the Siemens Mechatronic Systems Certification Exam in the spring. He earned a Platinum level National Career Readiness Certificate. Through Dual Enrollment at North Country Union High School, Cooper earned six college credits through CCV. Cooper plans to attend a top-rated engineering school after he graduates. Cooper was elected as Skills USA Treasurer and in the Additive Manufacturing competition he and his teammate won silver. He serves as the North Country Career Center representative of the student body at school board meetings. He is a member of the robotics club, varsity soccer team, STEM Academy, National Honor Society and volunteers with ENCORE after-school program mentoring elementary students. Cooper pushes his knowledge in the STEM field and works to contribute to his community and the world. He has participated in challenging summer opportunities through an advanced engineering camp at Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta, Georgia, and a Galapagos Islands Field Study, raising funds to be able to travel to Ecuador to study ecosystems and culture, carrying out an independent research project on fish and their ecosystems, and building an aquarium environment to study tilapia.

### **Elizabeth Vaughan (River Bend Career and Technical Center)**

Lizzie consistently engages with her peers and community to learn more about agriculture and serve the community. She wants to find a career in Agriculture and is interested in post-secondary education that will help her succeed in that goal. Lizzie has completed Game of Logging levels 1 & 2 and is currently being set up for work-based learning with White River Natural Resources Conservation District. She earned a gold level National Career Readiness Certificate and is a member of the National Honor Society and will soon be a member of the National Technical Honor Society. Lizzie takes a leadership role in her CTE program by creating learning opportunities for her peers such as planning farm field trips and designing a tree identification program. She is a member of 4-H and spends time working on her family dairy farm, babysitting, working for another local farm, and working at the local Agway store.

## Presidential Scholars: Career Technical Education (CTE)

### **Ayowunmi Phoebe Adewayi (Burlington Technical Center)**

Ayowunmi successfully completed prerequisite coursework over the summer in order to join Burlington Technical Center's Health Science Academy as a second-year student. She is taking the program at the more rigorous Honors level and will complete the program with college credit in Anatomy and Physiology II through Vermont State University. She will be eligible to sit for the National Healthcareer Association (NHA) Phlebotomy certification in the spring and is an active member of HOSA Future Health Professionals. Ayowunmi is deeply engaged in her community. She is in the Diversity Club and was active in the Black Student Union at her former school. She is also a member of The Society of Torch & Laurel and the National Academy of Future Physicians and Medical Scientists. Ayowunmi volunteers at the Human Society and as a kids' leader in her church. She is deeply committed to learning about other cultures and history as well as providing a welcoming space for people to celebrate their unique backgrounds.

### **Emma Cosgrove (Stafford Technical Center)**

Emma is on track to earn 12 college credits in her CTE center program through NHTI in courses including Engineering Principles and Computer Integrated Manufacturing. She has earned the Lean 101 credential and is on track to earn the Autodesk Fusion 360 Certified User and Certified Manufacturing Associate credentials. Emma earned the National Career Readiness Certificate at the Platinum level. She is a member of the National Technical Honor Society, National Honor Society, and the National Spanish Honor Society. Emma is actively involved with SkillsUSA and received a Silver Medal at the State-level Automated Manufacturing competition. She also competed with FIRST Robotics, where her team qualified for and competed at the world level. For her CTE program's capstone project, she is partnering with NASA engineers to design and manufacture a self-contained biome that could be used for efficient food production in urban, remote, or even extra-terrestrial locations. Emma also works as a hostess at the Killington Distillery, volunteers with Partners for Prevention / Vermont After School and at the Rutland VT MINT makerspace and, is a member of Rutland High School's Art Club and Varsity Field Hockey team.

### **Kennedy Desaultels (Burlington Technical Center)**

Through the Health Sciences Academy, Kennedy is attaining ten college credits in courses including Human Biology, Introduction to Healthcare and Medical Terminology, in addition to pursuing Dual Enrollment coursework opportunities through her high school, CVU. She will sit for the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians (NREMT) certification exam in the spring, is planning to pursue further education to become a physician and is especially interested in neuroscience. Kennedy is a member of the National Technical Honor Society and earned a Gold level National Career Readiness Certificate. She serves as a state officer for HOSA Future Health Professionals and was a voting delegate at the International Leadership Conference in Dallas, TX and plans to continue her active involvement in college. Kennedy volunteers with Girls on the Run and is a member of CVU's environmental action club, CVU Enact.

### **Luca Karki (Center for Technology, Essex)**

Luca is on track to graduate from high school having earned 23 college credits, ranging from program-focused courses like Burls to Boards and Wildlife Ecology, to Sociology and Precalculus. Luca has successfully completed levels 1 – 4 of the Game of Logging, a postsecondary credential focused on chainsaw safety, productivity, conservation and cutting techniques. He has also earned the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) Core and Heavy Equipment Level 1 certifications, as well as the National Career Readiness Certificate at the Gold level. Luca's plan is to attend a four-year university studying forest management with the goal of becoming a game warden. He is a member of the National Honor Society and National Technical Honor Society. In the state's Science Olympiad competition, Luca won a bronze medal in forestry. He is now participating in a CTE work-based learning paid internship with Shelburne Farms where he is an assistant forester working on combatting and uprooting invasive species to protect baby maple trees. Luca is greatly engaged in his community participating in his high school's Social Justice Union, volunteering with the history board for Essex

Westford School District, working with The Growing Peace Project, and getting involved with David Zuckerman's campaign. He has worked in many agricultural jobs including Paul Mazza's Farm, Vermont Youth Conservation Corps as a farm worker, and Audubon Vermont as a junior conservation technician.

### **Angkith Pradhan (Center for Technology, Essex)**

Angkith has been solving "real-world" problems since day one in his Mechanical Engineering program, developing digital concepts for working machines and then actually creating them, from bottle openers, to reverse engineering a robotic arm. He seeks out opportunities for engineering at every turn, including summer programs at the Governor's Institute of Vermont for Engineering and the Wentworth Institute of Technology pre-college program Impact-Lab, for which he raised funds from sponsors in order to participate. Angkith has earned six college credits from Vermont State University in Design Communication and Introduction to Chemistry and earned the National Career Readiness Certificate at the Gold level. He is a member of the National Honor Society and National Technical Honor Society and participates in SkillsUSA for Additive Manufacturing. Angkith has passed the Certified SolidWorks Associate (CSWA) exam, will sit for the Certified SolidWorks Professional (CSWP) exam, and will have opportunities to go out on career work experiences with local engineering firms. Angkith is dedicated to his community, volunteering with homework club in the library after school and coaching adaptive soccer to children through a program called TOPSoccer, hosted by the Vermont Soccer Association. He takes an active leadership role in the Multilingual Affinity Group at Center for Technology Essex and plays on the Essex High School soccer team.

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## **General**

The Presidential Scholars General category recognizes students for their contributions to school and community; citizenship; academic achievements, including traditional and non-traditional learning experiences; creativity and innovation in learning; leadership; and being an inspiration to others. Winners in this category are invited to apply to be National Presidential Scholars, a selection process through the US Department of Education.

## **Presidential Scholars: General**

### **Christopher Alfano (Burr and Burton Academy)**

Christopher has been active in BBA's Student Council for 4 years, working his way up to the office of President; he is currently planning town hall meetings to allow students to engage directly with their state representatives. Selected by the faculty as a Mentor to a 9th-grade advisory, Chris meets with his group twice a week and creates programming to support them. He also serves as a BBA Ambassador, touring visitors and helping transition new students during Orientation programming. Last year, Chris founded a school-based Unicef Chapter to increase awareness about global humanitarian issues. Chris serves as the Junior Board member of a local charity, Be Brave For Life. He organizes volunteer meetings to plan fundraisers for benign brain tumor research. In the past two years, he helped organize and run events that have raised \$35,000 for research. Chris also plays Varsity Lacrosse and is a member of BBA's Student Athletic Leadership Team. He is currently a National Merit Semi-Finalist and he was recently selected as one of two Vermont representatives to the United States Senate Youth Program this coming spring. A winning Debate and Model UN competitor, Chris was selected to participate in an all-expense paid summer program hosted at Georgetown (Civics Unplugged). He was selected for a research internship with local state representative, Mike Rice. He conceived, created, and is now marketing a free app (Civicly) to make civics education more accessible.

### **Sarah Ali (Burlington High School)**

Sarah is a Counselor-in-Training for the Boys and Girls Club where she assists counselors and works with the kindergarten and first grade students in planning activities, being an effective role model, and developing leadership skills. In this role, Sarah has earned multiple certifications through the American Red Cross: CPR, AED, Epinephrine Injection, and First Aid. Boys and Girls Club has also helped her build her skill set in communication and advocacy for herself, her community, and for others. Last spring, she was awarded Burlington Youth of the year as well as Vermont Youth of the Year. On top of her BGC work, Sarah participates in UVM Upward Bound which includes college prep classes and weekly advisory. During the summer she participates in it's six-week summer college program and completes volunteer work, such as painting murals and working as a pool spotter at the Boys and Girls Club. In addition to her strong academics and intense pursuit and focus on her education, Sarah is also a talented photographer. Last fall Sarah received two awards for her photography: third place from the Center for Whole Communities, a photo environmental justice competition documenting the issue of waste in her neighborhood, and a Silver Key from the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards for a portrait. Sarah's work was on display at the Brattleboro Museum of Art and Culture with the other Scholastic winners.

### **Matthew Califano (Craftsbury Academy)**

Matthew has given his time as a Teacher's Assistant in English and math courses, volunteered as a mentor for AmeriCorps's DREAM program, and worked as a Leader-in-Training with the Vermont Institute of Natural Science. He also serves on AmeriCorps's Vermont Advisory Board. He is Treasurer for his class at Craftsbury Academy, and a student representative to the OSSU Steering Committee where he is working to build student and parent engagement in our educational system. He has received the Youth Citizenship Award from the local DAR chapter, the Citizen-Scholar Book Award from UVM, and the Book Award for Academic Achievement and Social Conscience from St. Michael's College. Because of his service, he has also received the Congressional Award's Silver Medal and President's Volunteer Service Award Gold Medal twice. Matthew was named a College Board AP Scholar with Distinction, a College Board National Hispanic Scholar, a National Rural and Small Town Scholar, and a National Merit Semifinalist. Matthew authored a full-length play for which he won the Dorset Theatre Festival's Jean E. Miller Prize. Matthew was Vermont's sole winner in the 2023 National Council of Teachers of English Achievement Awards in Writing, winning First Class Distinction, and won the Lillie B. Hamilton Award. The Calvin Coolidge Presidential Foundation inducted him as a Coolidge Scholar this past summer. Every year, the Foundation selects five or fewer truly exceptional young Americans as Coolidge Scholars out of over 4,300 applicants nationwide. The Coolidge Scholarship is the only full-ride merit scholarship in America.

### **Maura Connelly (Middlebury Union High School)**

Maura is involved in Middlebury's Environmental Club and Art Club, and works at East View, a local community residence for senior citizens, as a server in the dining room. She is Peer Leader at MUHS, helping 9th graders transition from middle to high school at the onset of the academic year, a weekly commitment that lasts for the entire first quarter. She is Co-President of the school's Human Rights Club and is currently doing a drive for the local shelter in Middlebury. She has also organized events for Migrant Justice. Maura is pursuing the most academically challenging program at MUHS, the International Baccalaureate Diploma, and has consistently shown excellent time management skills and independent study habits that have highlighted her abilities as a stellar student. Her 4.04 GPA puts her at the top of her class. She traveled to Ecuador last year with the school as part of an immersion trip to further delve into her study of the Spanish language. She has also served as a Peer Leader at MUHS during her senior year, an honor position at the school where students are chosen by the faculty and administration.

### **Hannah Cunningham (Rice Memorial High School)**

Hannah was elected class President her Junior and Senior years after serving as the class Vice President her Freshman and Sophomore years. She has been an Orientation Leader each year and is the captain of her very competitive field hockey team. Hannah was appointed by the Burlington Mayor's office to and is an



active member of the City Board of Health, where she led the work on a plan for safe syringe disposal for the residents of Burlington. She is a Junior Facilitator for the Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership Conference (HOBY). Hannah has also been a long-time volunteer each month making and serving meals at the local Salvation Army and will be starting another program where she will be making and delivering food to individuals and families in the downtown Burlington area. Hannah has been recognized by AmeriCorps with the Presidential Service Silver Medal. She has achieved a 101.9 GPA and is an AP Scholar with Distinction. Hannah founded The Knights Banner, the Rice student newspaper. Since the founding of The Banner, Hannah was selected as the Vermont representative to the Al Neuharth National Free Spirit and Journalism Conference in Washington D.C. She is also now a student editor for the VT Digger. She was selected to the Emerging Rural Leadership Program at the University of Chicago, won the Manfred Hummel Award for the best junior year paper at Rice Memorial, the Clarkson University Leadership Award, the Quill and Scroll Journalism Honors Society Award and the St. Johnsbury Academy Model U.N. Outstanding Delegate Award.

### **Nadja Douoning (Winooski Middle High School)**

Nadja is a drummer and percussionist in the Winooski High School Jazz Band. Nadja began making music on her cell phone at age 12. She began playing the drums at age 15 when she moved to Vermont two years ago. Locally, Nadja has shared her music at poetry venues, during Community Gatherings at her high school, for special events at the Flynn Theater, and for statewide events sponsored by the Vermont Humanities Council, Clemmons Family Farm, and Junction Arts and Media (White River Junction, VT). Nationally, she received a scholarship to attend Berklee 5-Week ASPIRE Summer Music Program in Boston, Massachusetts. Nadja brought what she learned at Berklee back to Winooski with the goal of being a better musician and sharing her knowledge with others. Internationally, Nadja has traveled to Europe and Africa, most recently to Ivory Coast where she learned the history of the Bètè peoples and witnessed the AANIKA Professional Dance and Drumming Artists in a tribute performance for her father, a former member of the National Ballet of Ivory Coast and the Ki-Yi M'Bock Artist Colony.

### **Baxter Harrington (Middlebury Union High School)**

Baxter is a member of Team USA and participated in the Youth Skyrunning World Championships in the summer of 2023 in Italy. He was chosen as one of three student Peer Leader Coordinators to oversee the programming that welcomes MUHS's newly enrolling ninth graders as they transition from middle to high school. He captains the Cross Country team, is a member of the Nordic ski team and was last year's Northern Vermont Athletic Conference Small School Individual Champion. Baxter works part time at a local restaurant washing dishes and has also served part time as a janitor at a local elementary school. He still finds time to volunteer with his town's Fire and Rescue squad. He is a candidate for the full International Baccalaureate Diploma, MUHS's most demanding curriculum, and his GPA is one of the highest in his class (3.92). He has been recognized by the College Board as a National Rural and Small Town Scholar and is a recipient of the American Legion's award in Fine Arts, Design and Mathematics. He has participated in the Vermont Governor's Institute in Mathematics.

### **Lily Hutcheson (Burr and Burton Academy)**

Currently, Lily serves as a New Student Mentor and Communications Director of student council. She also volunteers at the Writing Center and serves as co-captain of the Speech and Debate team. She is most proud of her work and leadership efforts in BBA's arts department, where she works as a writer, director, and executive producer of our annual New Works One Act Theater Festival. Lily has served as a Community Leader for the Vermont Young Writers Project. Last summer, she attended two prestigious writing programs – Iowa and Sewanee. Lily wrote, produced, directed, and edited a short mockumentary-style film called "Mr. Collins and the Zombies of Gloucestershire." It was awarded third place by the Jane Austen Society of North America's national competition for young filmmakers. She has participated in the Poetry Out Loud Competition every year of high school and was a state finalist twice. She has been selected as a National Poets Program Semifinalist, a National Semifinalist in the Eugene O'Neill Young Playwrights Festival, a National Semifinalist in The Blank Theater Young Playwrights Festival, the winner of The Weston Theater Spring Playwrights Festival. She has been awarded Gold and Silver Scholastic medals: a 2023 Scholastic National Silver Medal Poetry; Regional Gold Key Poetry, and

Playwriting Regional Silver Key Playwriting, Film. She was also the 2021 Winner for The Dorset Theater Young Playwrights Festival.

### **Maya Jones (South Burlington High School)**

Maya founded the SBHS Black Student Union in her junior year which became a space for black and brown students and supporters to address issues of both institutional racism and systemic advocacy. Maya also made some changes to the student tour guide program, making it much more student friendly. Reminding us how crucial lunch is for students, she now makes sure new students have access to peer groups at lunch and includes information about the school's affinity spaces for students of color. She has been a mentor and leader on the dance team, working with younger participants on learning routines and team building. She is currently enrolled in a Holocaust Studies course, AP Environmental Studies and AP Psychology, all of which are challenging. As a senior, she now reads the announcements to the school daily, is a 3-season athlete and an elected leader on Student Council. Maya reached her goal GPA and manages to make meaningful connections with adults and students every day. Her work now involves mentoring younger students in the work of social justice advocacy, a legacy that will live on.

### **Myles Lahue (Burr and Burton Academy)**

Myles consistently demonstrates responsible citizenship through active involvement with his church's youth group and BBA's nationally recognized Unified program where he serves as a Partner on the Unified Basketball team and participates in Unified Drum Circle. The Unified basketball team unites athletes with special needs and partners in a collaborative environment that champions inclusivity and embraces the participation of individuals, regardless of their skills. The Unified Drum Circle is another unique opportunity to impact the school community and help students with mental disabilities. He also serves outside of school as an Assistant Coach for the Northshire Special Olympics Soccer Team. Myles was recognized as an AP Scholar in 2023, made the Headmaster's list (all As) for the past 3 years, and won the Bill Nye Science Award from STEM Organization of America for an innovative science project. He showcases his creativity by employing unconventional storytelling methods, such as composing original music for a Greek mythology story, utilizing various poems to critique a book, and even creating a podcast and interviewing a friend to understand their story. He conducted an experiment on the effect of high molarity solutions on the change in potato mass which led him to explore practical applications in the food industry, offering insights into methods for creating low-fat French fries and extending the shelf life of fresh produce.

### **Molly Luikart (The Long Trail School)**

Molly stands out as an extraordinary natural athlete, consistently propelling Long Trail's varsity soccer and basketball teams to success over several seasons. Her impact on her small school's sports legacy is undeniable, earning her a well-deserved place among the best players in its history. Molly's prowess has translated into multiple post-season awards and recognition, particularly notable as the basketball team remains undefeated. Beyond her exceptional athletic abilities, Molly emerges as a remarkable leader. Having served as captain for both the soccer and basketball teams, she leads by example, employing both words and actions to inspire confidence in her teammates. This leadership extends far beyond the athletic fields, as evidenced by her role as the president of the ambassador club – an esteemed position. Molly's commitment to community service is commendable. Actively involved in UNICEF, the Do Something Club, and the Social Justice Club, she exemplifies an engaged and socially conscious citizen. Academically, Molly's cumulative GPA is not only the highest in her class but also among the best in the school's history. In essence, Molly embodies the spirit of a Long Trail student, excelling not only in sports and academics but also in leadership and community engagement.

### **Peyton Metruk (Bellows Free Academy Fairfax)**

Since middle school Peyton has volunteered in elementary school classrooms, building relationships with both students and teachers. In high school she joined a small mentoring program which partnered high school students with elementary school buddies as mentors, and at the end of her sophomore year she was selected

President of the club. She has worked tirelessly with her Co-President to restructure the club and its leadership system, and to provide mentors with strategies and skills that will help him be better mentors and better leaders. To do this she introduced the first ever mentor retreat this year through a partnership with an organization called DREAM. When she joined the club there were eleven members, including the presidents; today the club is 60 strong and growing. Peyton is also a senior student representative on the school board and was recognized as the University of Vermont Green and Gold Scholar for academic excellence. Peyton participated in the MathWorks Math Modeling Challenging (or M3 Challenge), a national event in which each team has 14 hours to work through a real-world math challenge. Recently she was invited to speak at a leadership conference for student athletes. She worked with a group of students that are on an advisory committee for the VPA to develop two different presentations, one about sportsmanship in high school athletics and in the other about the history and impacts of Title IV in athletics.

### **James Redding (*The Long Trail School*)**

In his seven years at Long Trail, JD Redding has made an unparalleled impact at our small school in a variety of ways. As a leader, he is captain of both our varsity golf and basketball teams. He currently serves as president of the National Honor Society after his stint as treasurer last year. JD has consistently been at the top of his class with a cumulative GPA of 93.2. He takes a very rigorous curriculum and has the highest ACT score in the class. As an athlete, JD was a starter on our varsity soccer and basketball teams as an 8th grader. He has gone on to be a state finalist in golf and helped propel his basketball team to the state semi-finals the last two seasons. Beyond the realm of sports, JD is an active and engaged community member. His commitment is evident in the time he dedicates to mentoring local youth basketball players and golfers. Additionally, JD actively participates in our student ambassador program and has been a steadfast member of the student council since sixth grade. It comes as no surprise that JD was selected to represent Long Trail at Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership 2022, a testament to his exemplary talents and accomplishments. When one thinks of the ideal Long Trail student, JD Redding should quickly come to mind.

### **Malayna Sweet-Werneke (*Bellows Free Academy Fairfax*)**

Malayna is a member of the National Honor Society, helps sort and distribute toys and food for the United Way's Operation Happiness, volunteers at numerous American Red Cross blood drives, has organized a basketball game for the Make-a-Wish Foundation, helps at her local Historical Society's yearly rummage sale, and hosted a Prom Dress Drive for Camp Ta-Kum-Ta, a camp for kids with pediatric cancer. As the vice president of our National Honor Society this year, she help other members plan and carry out their service learning projects. Malayna is an active leader in her school's Peer Support organization and is one of the yearbook editors. With the goal of becoming a book publisher but lacking many opportunities close to her school, she created her own independent study. She met with editors and publishers around Vermont and with the Denver Institute of Publishing to learn about the field. She is very passionate about English and subjects related to that so when my school offered both AP Language and Composition and AP Literature and Composition, but because of a scheduling problem took AP Language and Composition during my first semester and AP Literature and Composition during the second semester of her junior year, passing both exams at the end of the year.

### **Farren Stainton (*Woodstock Union High School*)**

Farren is a leader in both Woodstock's Cross Country and Nordic Skiing teams and has been instrumental in creating a community feel in both. She has a great and natural ability to bring her teammates together by designing activities such as team exercises outside of practice and coordinating team dinners. When sports conclude she is a steadfast member of a summer camp called Camp Coniston where she now has a leadership role. Farren currently holds a 4.0 GPA. During her junior year she took 5 AP courses, Biochemistry through a virtual high school platform, and an independent study in Biology and Microbiology. She is currently taking 4 AP courses; in total, she has taken eleven AP courses and has received A's across the board. She received the Underclass Award for Academic Excellence in Geometry, the Perseverance Award in AP Calculus, the Saint Anselm Book Award, and the RIT Science and Math Award.