

Vermont Agency of Education Recognizes 2023 Presidential Scholars

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Montpelier, Vt. - The Vermont Agency of Education announced Vermont's Presidential Scholar recipients and honorable mentions for the 2022-2023 school year in a ceremony at the Vermont State House.

These outstanding students were selected based on nominations from teachers, administrators, and fellow students. Presidential scholars are recognized in three categories; general, arts and career technical education. Among this year's scholars are technologists, writers, student leaders, advocates, mentors and volunteers. This group of scholars includes students working to destigmatize mental health, bring new facilities to their schools, prioritize equity in their school libraries, found new school clubs, master the trumpet, and teaching other students to code.

"Vermont's presidential scholar class of 2023 exemplifies the best of Vermont Education," said Secretary of Education **Dan French**. "Each of these students have excelled academically, through either traditional or non-traditional learning experiences, and both in many cases. They are responsible citizens, committed to their community, demonstrating leadership in their schools, and serving as an example for their peers. I congratulate the students and their families for this impressive achievement."

Vermont's 2023 Presidential Scholars in the General Category are:

- **Andrew Claire**, Burr and Burton Academy
- **Anna Isselhardt**, Peoples Academy
- **Emilia de Jounge**, Burr and Burton Academy
- **John Viens**, Richford High School
- **Madeline Pike**, Richford High School
- **Tovahn Vitols**, Rivendell Academy

Vermont's 2023 Presidential Scholars in the Arts Category are:

- **Matthew Califano**, Craftsbury Academy
- **Hayden Jessiman**, Burlington Technical Center (Mount Mansfield UHS)
- **Anthony Rizvanov**, Burlington Technical Center (Essex HS)
- Honorable Mention: **Alexander Califano**, Craftsbury Academy

Vermont's 2023 Presidential Scholars in the Career Technical Education (CTE) Category are:

- **Emma Dana**, River Valley Technical Center SD (Springfield HS)
- **Jaden Gallup**, North Country Career Center (North Country UHS)
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- **Evan Hodgson**, Center for Technology, Essex (Essex HS)
- **Haley Michaud**, Green Mountain Technology & Career Center (Hazen UHS)
- **Damian Stagner**, River Valley Technical Center SD (Springfield HS)
- Honorable Mentions:
 - **Declan Anderson**, Hannaford Career Center SD (Middlebury UHS)
 - **Hanna Grasso**, Central Vermont Career Center (Montpelier HS)
 - **Winter Nakos**, Windham Regional Career Center (Twin Valley MHS)

About the Presidential Scholars Program

The [U.S. Presidential Scholars Program](#) was established in 1964, by executive order of President Johnson, to recognize and honor some of our nation's most distinguished graduating high school seniors. In 1979, the program was extended to recognize students who demonstrate exceptional talent in the visual, creative, and performing arts. In 2015, the program was again extended to recognize students who demonstrate ability and accomplishment in career and technical education fields.

The Vermont Presidential Scholars Program recognizes graduating high school seniors who show outstanding scholarship, leadership, and service to their communities. This year six scholars have been chosen in the general category, five scholars in the Career Technical Education (CTE) category, and three scholars in the Arts. There were also several students receiving honorable mention, three in the CTE category, and one in the Arts category.

Vermont scholars for the general and CTE categories will be invited to apply to the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program, which will announce its winners in May 2023. Additional Vermont students are invited to apply by the U.S. Department of Education based on their SAT and/or ACT scores. Each year, up to 161 students are named as national Presidential Scholars – one of the highest honors for high school students. A complete list of recipients for the 2022 national award can be found on the [U.S. Presidential Scholars Program webpage](#).

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About Vermont's 2023 Presidential Scholars

VT Presidential Scholar Recipients for the General Category

Andrew Claire, Burr and Burton Academy:

Andrew attends Burr and Burton Academy and has worked closely with the school's technology department to create the school's first ever unified eSports team, has constructed a super-computer to mine cryptocurrencies and has educated other students to carry on this project after they have graduated. They believe that in order to solve the problems that have often polarized our world today, we must put ourselves in situations that allow us to view issues from varying perspectives in order to keep an open mind and move toward resolution.

Anna Isselhardt, Peoples Academy:

Anna attends Peoples Academy and is a founding member of the school's Gender and Sexuality Club, Equity, the Justice and Inclusion Club, and has co-facilitated a class exploring historical and current events regarding social justice and equity. They see housing insecurity as a problem that needs to be addressed in our state and through utilizing existing housing infrastructure not currently being used, could be repurposed to provide a safe place to sleep

Emilia de Jounge, Burr and Burton Academy:

Emilia attends Burr and Burton Academy and in their role as a new student mentor plans activities and events to help students settle into high school, offering advice on academics and extracurricular activities through an advisory group that meets twice weekly. This student wants to see that issues regarding mental health are covered in school curriculum as equally as physical health, believing that increased knowledge and awareness will help remove the negative stigmatization often associated with these afflictions that can affect any one of us in many ways.

Madeline Pike, Richford High School:

Madeline attends Richford High School, has been a legislative page at the Vermont State House, and is president of their local chapter of the National Honor Society, where they have personally spearheaded a school supply drive to ensure that all children in the community had access to the necessary tools for their learning. They also see playing sports as a great way for youth to make friends, stay healthy, and succeed academically, however, many free or affordable opportunities to play on a youth sports team do not exist due to lack of volunteers and propose that high school athletes

volunteer and coach these teams to help solve this problem while also providing them with community service hours.

John Viens, Richford High School:

John attends Richford High School, is a member of the Vermont Youth Council and the school's National Honor Society, engaging in activities such as editing and maintaining the school's website and obtaining grant funding to improve the community which provided a public ice rink, community fun-run, movie night, and more. They have a strong interest in local and state government and how to leverage funding to improve community facilities, a current passion is to bring a track to their area so that local track and field athletes do not have to travel up to an hour to the nearest facility.

Tovahn Vitols, Rivendell Academy:

Tovahn attends Rivendell Academy, is the student representative on the school board, volunteers extensively for the Upper Valley Trails Alliance, and was accepted into a semester program at the Mountain School where they were involved in restructuring that school's library to ensure that its books were culturally appropriate and promoted equality. They are intrigued with linguistics and how language has played a role in dividing modern society, and seek to gain an understanding of the key uses of language that have added to this situation and take steps to remove them to improve this generation's future.

Vermont Presidential Scholar Recipients for the Art Category

Matthew Califano, Craftsbury Academy:

Matthew showed an obvious commitment to the arts. The review committee noted his strong love of the English language and the use of strong visuals in his writing. They were impressed by his humble talent in showcasing other young writers. He attends Craftsbury Academy and has spent a great deal of time at the Dorset Theatre. He was described by his teacher to have an intense drive to create that has never been seen before in a student of his age.

Hayden Jessiman, Mount Mansfield Union High School and Burlington Technical Center:

Hayden took the pandemic as an opportunity to pursue his art education. His teacher noted his willingness to self-teach and self-motivation in hours of online tutorials and a willingness to experiment. The review committee was impressed by his technical skills in both colored pencils and digital media. They enjoyed that he used his community as a place to explore and create, using his art to make it a better place. This student attends Mount Mansfield Union Highschool and Burlington Technical Center.

Anthony Rizvanov, Essex High School and Burlington Technical Center:

Anthony was acknowledged for mastery of the trumpet and his involvement with all the instrumental ensembles at Essex High School where he attends. He was described as constantly striving to create new music. The review committee was impressed by his mastery of the trumpet through great technical ability, tone, and well-produced pieces overall. One member of the review committee had this to say: "He is going places and I want to see where he goes." This student showed above-and-beyond involvement in the arts.

Vermont Presidential Scholars for the Arts Honorable Mention: **Alexander Califano, Craftsbury Academy**

Vermont Presidential Scholar Recipients for the Career Technical Education (CTE) Category

Emma Dana, River Valley Technical Center – Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering

Emma served in leadership roles in the state SkillsUSA during both 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years where she brought people together virtually and in person in the 2021-2022 school year, is a team leader on this year's Greenway Challenge Team while Emma's team is designing a solar powered composting bin that can be set-up and used at public transfer stations. In her sophomore and junior years in the Advanced Manufacturing Program Emma earned 18 college credits as well as becoming a Certified Manufacturing Associate, a nationally recognized post-secondary credential.

Jaden Marie-Schott Gallup, North Country Career Center – Engineering and Mechatronics, Welding

Jaden moved to Vermont mid-way through her junior year and was able to successfully complete a year of the Welding program earning a nationally recognized post-secondary certification in welding - the D1.1 Unlimited Structural Steel Welding Certification. She is scheduled to do a work-based learning experience with a machinist this year, pursues an academic course load including AP and Honors classes in Psychology and Biology, serves as the SkillsUSA chapter president and spearheads outreach with the Student Voice group including advocating for access non-traditional students access to CTE.

Evan Hodgson, Center for Technology, Essex – Dental Assisting

Evan did two placements at UVM Medical center and this year is spending twelve hours in two different dental offices, earning the Dental Radiology certification, will sit for the national Dental Assisting certification exam, was inducted into the National Technical Honor Society and will have taken 4 courses with CCV, 5 with VTC, and one with BYU and VTVC to graduate with 31 college credits. As he wrote in his college application,

“Everyone deserves to feel like their smile radiates beauty. If I could restore beauty in a person’s smile each day, this would have a profound effect on my sense of purpose and the beauty in my community. Dental hygiene will allow me to do what I do best, restore beauty and character to the world.”

Haley Michaud, Green Mountain Technology & Career Center – Heating, Ventilation & Air Conditioning

Haley placed 1st at the Vermont State SkillsUSA competition, placed 7th in the national championships, carries a rigorous workload earning a 4.0 GPA in HVAC and academic classes, has obtained the universal EPA 608 certification and is working toward NORA Bronze Oil Heat certification. She is also a member of the National Technical Honor Society and has been accepted to the University of Northern Ohio in a 2-year technical education HVAC program. After that, she has a serious interest in becoming an engineer where she can turn her talents toward designing the HVAC equipment of the future.

Damian Stagner, River Valley Technical Center – Information Technology

Damien helped the Springfield Town Library by creating an animated scavenger hunt using QR codes, served as the lead teacher on a programming summer camp mini-course teaching students how to code, is working as a Black River Innovation Campus Minecraft Instructor, earned Adobe Professional Certification and CIW Web Development Associate and is working towards the CompTIA A+ certification. He will be co-oping at Simon Pearce Glassware, plans to develop his own web design business, will have completed nine Dual Enrollment credits, is a National Technical Honor Society Student and serves as an ambassador at the CTE center. As his nominator wrote, “Damian Stagner has the technical, interpersonal, and employability skills needed to change the world.”

Vermont Presidential Scholars for CTE Honorable Mention:

Declan Anderson, Patricia A. Hannaford Career Center

Hanna Grasso, Central Vermont Career Center

Winter Nakos, Windham Regional Career Center