



Newsletter of the HVRHS Career Experience Program

Spring 2020

COVID-19 Pivot

Spring 2020 has dramatically impacted life for HVRHS faculty, staff, students, and their families. While it's created considerable chaos, it's also led to robust creativity. Finding novel approaches to keep ourselves on track has been the order of the day.

This out-of-the-box thinking thrust upon us by the pandemic is a life and career skill. Digging deep and working differently is also in the tool kit of an adaptable and resilient person, citizen, and employee.

Learning to count on ourselves and depend on others for help when we're struggling with emotions are critical, as is our need for personal connection, which has been laid bare by social distancing and lockdown.

We'll need to come up with new ways to approach many parts of our lives. Once we accept that the new normal will not be like the old one, we can cast off the blinders and move ahead with purpose.

The Career Experience Program wishes the best of luck to the graduating class of 2020. You're a resilient and gritty cohort of students surrounded by a school community that believes in you. You'll make this work! And if you need help, c'mon back. You know where to find us.

Resources for School to Career After Graduation

Are you heading straight into the labor market after high school? Going to school nearby and working part or full time? If so, there are many organizations and online resources to help you every step of the way.

Remember, we live in a tri-state region--there are also jobs to explore in New York and Massachusetts.

Here are some links to help you navigate your next steps.

Job and Career Resources

[Job Corps](#)

[CT Career Paths Job Guide](#)

[A Look at Connecticut's Entry-Level Occupations](#)

[CT's Stem and Manufacturing Jobs](#)

[CT Hires](#)

[New Opportunities in Torrington, CT](#)

[Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board](#)

[American Job Center in Torrington, CT](#)

NY and MA Job Search Resources

[NY State Department of Labor Job Bank](#)

[NY Hire Now](#)

[Massachusetts MassHire JobQuest](#)

Career Advice

[The Muse](#)

[Occupational Outlook Handbook](#)

[Learn How to Become](#)

[Best Jobs for the Future](#)

A full list of resources can be found [here](#). If September arrives and you're having trouble finding a position, email Dr. O'Neill. Let's talk, review your resume and cover letter, and strategize about potential next steps. ▣

Making Oral History: Intern Val Exploring the 1970s Through Alumni Interviews

By Val

The hills are alive with oral history and an HVRHS student internship sponsored by Housatonic Heritage allowed senior intern Val an opportunity to gain skills and delve into the past. Using ECE United States History student interviews with HVRHS alumni from the 1970s she created an oral history podcast.

Even though I've lived in this area for my entire life, I've always questioned how small and secluded these towns really are. It wasn't until I got to high school, met new students and HVRHS faculty, and got more involved with my community that I learned that this area and the school has a history of its own.

Working with mentors at my school and the Oral History Heritage Center gave me the opportunity to examine and elaborate on a passion of mine: being involved with my community.



Intern Val meeting with the internship leadership team (from left) Peter Vermilyea, Dan Bolognani, and Judith Monachina. Behind the camera: Mary O'Neill.

Though it has been a thorough process to cull information and compose a podcast episode, the motivation from my community and support from mentors kept me focused. Specifically, Judith Monachina's guidance and teachings pushed me to view local history and academic projects differently. She gave me advice that I will bring to college to be a better learner and researcher. Spending hours examining interviews, studying their speech, and exploring the time period, I learned the significance of oral and local history.

Especially being a first-generation American, local history allowed me to explore the complex culture my area holds and gave me a sense of place. Hearing alumni speak of their experiences, in and out of Housatonic, allowed me to look at my own journey as an HVRHS student from a different lens.

Considering that I am a person that is drawn to leaving the area and exploring new places, analyzing these interviews encouraged me to redefine the northwest corner of Connecticut, the area that I call home. ▣

This podcast was made possible through funding from Housatonic Heritage in collaboration with the Housatonic Heritage Oral History Center at Berkshire Community College and Housatonic Valley Regional High School's Social Studies Department and the Career Experience Program. Special thanks to HVRHS alumni from the 1970s who participated in the interviews and the ECE United States History students who conducted and transcribed them. Thank you student intern Valerie Lenis, along with her podcast team of Dan Bolognani, Judith Monachina, Peter Vermilyea, and Mary O'Neill.

As always, thank you to Cindy Fuller for logistical and administrative support.

Summer 2020: Punching Back at the Pandemic

This is going to be a summer like no other, but it doesn't mean you can't use it to grow in new ways.

The reality is that organized camps and enrichment programs are either canceled or are going online. Summer jobs will likely be less plentiful. You can employ a self-directed entrepreneurial mindset to salvage it, turn it around, and build skills for YOUR future.

It's going to take initiative and imagination--something that young people like you have in large quantities.

It's going to mean a paradigm shift. A paradigm is a structure, framework, or organizing principle for how we view something. Then, as scientist Thomas Kuhn posits--something happens. We're shifted out of that paradigm by a new discovery or in this case by an event--the COVID pandemic.

Now it's time to cast off the paradigm of business as usual, of programs and events organized for you and think of ways that YOU can self-motivate, self-identify your own priorities and interests, and self-generate the ways to make things happen in your life.

You will have to generate your energy this summer to move along your own continuum of development, broaden your horizons, and deepen your interest and knowledge in a topic that you're interested in.

There are vast online resources at your disposal. There are people in your community who are available to you and I can help connect you with. Your teachers can also help you locate academic resources that can help you along your journey.

So after you take a few weeks to restore yourselves after school ends, it will be time to punch back at the pandemic and propel yourselves forward.

Here are some ways to get started--and I'll keep adding to the list:

- If you're taking on a project at home with your family, like starting a garden, building a chicken coop, painting your house please understand that these are ALL resume worthy. Even caring for younger siblings or an older relative is not only about love and duty, but you're also building skills and there are ways to feature those on your resume even if it's an unpaid part of family life.
- Take a free online class through a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC). The most common of these is [edX](#) and [Coursera](#). Here's an article with more information [Taking a MOOC](#). Most MOOCs have the option to pay a small fee and earn a certificate. This might be worthwhile for your resume and to prove your mastery of the content.
- Take an online college course through one of the CT State colleges and universities. [Northwest CT Community College Course Search](#). This course search for NCCC now is systemwide for all community colleges in CT. It's a great way to take a college course over the summer and build out your resume.
- Enhance your computer skills with [Free Code Camp](#). Take a course on [Getting Started with Google Sheets](#). Although we operate in a Google environment, Google Sheets are very much like Excel. Having some fluency in how to create and manipulate a

spreadsheet looks awesome on a resume and many organizations use Excel.

- If you are really motivated, go the distance with Google and earn your [Google IT Support Certificate](#). This can get your foot in the door of a company and is a great resume builder.
- Options to learn about clouds beyond Cumulus and Nimbus can be found [AWS Education for 14 and Older](#)
- Build your reading list. Reading more builds vocabulary, imagination, and empathy--useful workplace skills. Paying attention to writing is another excellent skill for your future and your career. There's no career out there that doesn't depend to some degree on the ability to string together cohesive and coherent sentences. Talk to your English teacher or check out this list [30 Books Teens Should Read Before 18](#)
- Create your own service project [Youth Service America Resources](#). I'm happy to help you think about how to structure something and connect you with people who can assist and enrich your project.
- It's a big election year--and your voice is important. Here are some resources to educate yourself about the issues. Even if you're not able to vote, you will be soon. You can use this as an opportunity to educate voters in your household about issues that are important to you. Here's a guide to how to get involved [Youth Service America-Ways to Get Involved](#). Here's a link to the [Connecticut League of Conservation Voter](#). Your candidates need volunteers and youthful energy. If

you are having trouble thinking of issues that are important, here's what other teens are thinking [Top Election Issues Teens Want to Talk About](#). If you'd like to create a voter's guide for teens around a particular issue, which documents candidates' positions in a non-partisan way--let's talk. That's something I did with a class I taught at WCSU.

- Sign up for a [Nepris Virtual Career Summer Camp](#) to explore careers. Think about something you'd like to know more about that really puts fire in your belly. Start researching. Talk to your teachers. Talk to me about connecting you with experts and how to describe this self-directed learning on your resume. If you need funding, let's work together. There are sources of funding waiting to be tapped.

Email Dr. O'Neill at moneill@hvrhs.org.

Let's do this--together. ▣

Sticky Note Tip: This summer might be the perfect time to begin a mindfulness meditation routine. Meditation is proven to aid in reducing anxiety and depression. why? Because it grounds you in the present moment, the only moment you have control over. It pulls you out of fixating on the future, which exists in your imagination, and it helps you to identify and process affective emotions--the ones that stress you out. Apps for mediation include [Headspace](#) and [Calm](#). More resources can be found at the [greater good Science Center](#).

Kudos and gratitude to the entire Region One community of teachers, school staff, administrative staff, leadership, and board members. There was so much hard work done by everyone to keep the learning happening this spring. Have a relaxing and healthy summer!

Gillian Fox: First Job, Best Job, Worst Job

First Job, Best Job, Worst Job is a new feature of Sticky Note where faculty and staff share their career experiences with students and the local community.



The multi-lingual Gillian Fox teaches in our World Languages Department.

She has two bachelor's, a master's, and two certificates pursued in three different countries--United States, Spain, and Germany.

First job: *I was a dishwasher and food prep lackey at a Tex-Mex restaurant. It also taught me skills I still use today. Everyone should work in customer service at some point just to gain that perspective.*

Best job: *Other than being a mom? Here at Housatonic Valley Regional High School--even though I never envisioned myself teaching high school! It's because of the people-- both colleagues and students! Everyone is so welcoming and willing to help out one another-- it's a fantastic atmosphere to work and learn in.*

Worst job: *Working at a coffee shop after college. My boss had a violent temper. After an episode, we decided it was enough and had a mass walkout the next day. We learned that we had a voice and we would not be mistreated.*

Fox shares some career wisdom she's gathered along her path:

- Learning a language can be very frustrating but also so rewarding. It can allow you to communicate with locals

on a trip and save someone's life in an emergency. Did you know that being fluent in another language can help you earn up to \$20k more per year?

- Always go home knowing you've put in your best effort-- every day may not be stellar, but do what you can
- Stay open to options, and always give two weeks notice-- unless the coffee shop owner throws a chair at you!
- There will be parts of every job that you won't love, but hunker down and do them. Make a reward system for yourself if necessary. ▢

Thank you, Robin Beaujon

The Career Experience Program thanks so many in the school and wider community for their support and willingness to collaborate.

In particular, thank you to Robin Beaujon who has been a wonderful partner for the past three years as the Career Experience Program takes root at HVRHS. Robin is retiring after 26 years dedicated to HVRHS students, helping them find a path forward in their lives. She forged effective relationships in the school and was always willing to lend a hand. ▢



Robin--Good luck and good health to you and your family. The entire HVRHS community will miss you!