



Press Release
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12th Annual Women Can Do! Conference Serves as Link Between High School Girls and Nontraditional Career and Educational Opportunities

Over 400 high school girls and their chaperones/teachers from across Vermont and parts of New Hampshire descended on Vermont Technical College in Randolph Center today for Vermont Works for Women's **12th annual Women Can Do conference!** They participated in 37 different workshops, interacted with dozens of women working in nontraditional fields, and engaged in hands-on learning experiences through an exposition of tools and techniques – all designed to encourage their interest in taking technical courses, enrolling at technical high schools, and considering nontraditional careers.

“Our new Action Expo, an idea that came from the technical educators and administrators serving on Women Can Do’s steering committee, was successful in providing participants with more time to explore a greater number of experiential learning opportunities,” said Kelly Walsh, coordinator of girls programming at VWW and lead organizer of the conference. “The girls really got a taste of a wide variety of trades and technology careers by going from station to station trying out new tools and techniques.”

In addition to the Action Expo, the nearly 40 workshop offerings highlighted emerging high tech and green energy careers as well as jobs in architecture and engineering, information technology and computers, natural resources, public safety and health, communications, trades, and other non-traditional careers. Sessions included topics such as “In Bridge We Trust” (for students interested in civil and mechanical engineering), “Soft-Where?” (for those considering a career as a software designer), “Renewables are Ready” (for participants wanting to know more about wind, solar and other renewable technologies), and “Under the Hood” (for girls curious about auto maintenance).

“With recent reports forecasting significant labor shortages in the skilled trades and numerous studies pointing to the economic and social value of investing in women, the Women Can Do

conference responds by serving as a lightning rod for girls thinking about technical education and careers ,” said Tiffany Bluemle, Executive Director of Vermont Works for Women. “Conference participants had the opportunity to discover that a whole new world of opportunity awaits them, and that they are not alone in wanting to explore a nontraditional path.”

Women Can Do is a program of Vermont Works for Women whose mission is to help women and girls recognize their potential and explore, pursue and excel in work that leads to economic independence. Additional generous support comes from Vermont Technical College, eleven technical high schools from across Vermont, the Vermont Department of Education, the Vermont Department of Labor, the Vermont Office of Economic Opportunity, and the Vermont Commission on Women.

For more information, contact Lucy Comstock-Gay at 802-655-8900, ext. 110, 603-731-6041 (cell) or lcomstockgay@vtworkforwomen.org. Additional information can be found at www.vtworkforwomen.org.

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Conference participants represent the following schools:

Barre Technical Center
Bellows Free Academy, St. Albans
Caledonia School, St. Johnsbury
Canaan Schools
Central VT Academy, Barre
Cold Hollow Career Center, Enosburg Falls
Cornerstone Christian School, Lyndonville
Center for Technology Essex
Champlain Valley Union High School, Hinesburg
Craftsbury Academy, Craftsbury
Jean Garvin School, Williston
Green Mountain Technical Center, Hyde Park
Hartford Area Career and Technology Center, White River Junction
Harwood Union, St. Duxbury
Hinsdale, Hinsdale (NH)
Lamoille Union, Hyde Park
Laraway School, Johnson
LEARN, Lyndonville
Leland & Gray Union Middle and High School, Townshend
Lyndon Institute, Lyndon
Mill River Union High School, N. Clarendon
New Horizons (Lund Family Center), Burlington
Montpelier High School
Northfield Middle and High School
People’s Academy, Morrisville
Randolph Technical Career Center
Rivendell Academy, Orford, NH
River Valley Technical Center, Springfield
St. Johnsbury Academy
S. Burlington School District
Southwest VT Career Development Center, Bennington
Stafford Technical Center, Rutland
Stowe High School
Whitcomb Junior/Senior High School, Bethel
Windham Regional Career Center, Brattleboro