# Interviews With Retiring Teachers

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*Many teachers are retiring this year. While we are sad to see them go, we hope they look back fondly on their time at CVU and are excited for the opportunities ahead. We dedicate this issue to the untiring commitment of these members of our community. A sincere expression of gratitude to:* ***John Bennett***, ***Peter Booth***, ***Darcy Cochones***, ***Jim Clapp***, ***Cindy Day***, ***Christopher Hood***, ***Karen Kirkland***, ***Marilyn Mashia***, ***Andrew Miskavage***, ***Debbie Seaton***, ***Patti Spear***, *and* ***Mary Stearns***. The Hawks' Nest *interviewed three of those retiring to hear their reflections and thoughts about CVU and their retirement ahead. Interviews are edited for brevity.*

**Interview with John Bennett:**

**Q: How many years were you at CVU?**
**A:** I taught here starting in the 2001-02 school year, so 24 years. Also was an intern here in 1995.

**Q: What did you enjoy during your time here?**
**A:** I enjoyed coaching Scholars Bowl for 24 years. We won four state championships and competed successfully at the national level. I worked on five student trips to Europe. I enjoyed advisory, working with advisees on Grad Challenge, and leading my Grad Challenge reading group from 2013-2020.

**Q: What are you most proud of?**
**A:** I am proud of what our Scholars Bowl teams accomplished over the past 24 years. I am proud to have given CVU students a travel abroad experience- I benefited from these opportunities so it was great to provide those opportunities to students. I am always happy to hear about a student who went on those trips, who is continuing to travel abroad in college or later. I also am proud of the hard work our group of social studies teachers in the core did with Model UN and Core debates- that includes working with **Garett MacCurtain**, **Kari Hoose**, **Katie Kuntz**, and **Katherine Riley**.

**Q: What classes did you teach?**
**A:** I taught in the core from 2001-2015. I taught Humanities 10 from 2015-2023, and US In the World from 2015-2025. My favorite times were teaching in the Core. I enjoyed all my teaming experiences.

**Q: Any advice for new teachers?**
**A:** Your teaching career is going to be a marathon. Pace yourself. June always comes! Try not to take anything personally. Create success opportunities for students, and you will be successful.

**Q: What are you looking forward to most after leaving CVU?**
**A:** I am looking forward to a different pace of life however. I am not sure whether I am going to immediately start a part time job or relax for a few weeks.

**Q: Any other thoughts?**
**A:** Yes! Although I am retiring from full time teaching, I will still be at CVU working as a substitute teacher next year and really looking forward to it.

**Interview with Patti Spear:**

**Q: How long have you been working at CVU?**
**A:** 17 years.

**Q: Where did you work before?**
**A:** I was a mom, and, for 10-plus years before that, I was in municipal planning. I was a senior planner at a regional planning commission. I stayed home five years, because my husband traveled internationally and we have to have somebody home.

**Q: So, what have you done at CVU?**
**A:** I started out as a para and in the last seven or eight years, I've been the science program assistant, and I support students for 10th-grade integrated bio.

**Q: What have you liked about working at CVU?**
**A:** I really love the awareness of the whole person - not child, the whole person. Yes, academics are important, but also that they are healthy people otherwise as well. It's more important than even the academic problems.

**Q: What are you most proud of that you've done here at CVU?**
**A:** The students that came in thinking that they couldn't understand science leaving with some confidence in their ability to understand science. It was really important to me, and it was a really important progression to watch.

**Q: Any advice for new teachers?**
**A:** Be organized. Because there'll be seven people teaching the class next year. They will all have different deadlines and have different expectations for achievement. Students will all have different issues. You become a point of sharing information to people who are supporting students, otherwise, making sure they understand the deadlines, being organized, and kind.

**Q: What are you looking forward to doing after CVU?**
**A:** After CVU, I hope to visit my daughter, who runs a care farm in North Reading - to be able to maybe have the flexibility to go out and help her with planting or something if she is running short of time. And, do some creative stuff like quilting, gardening. I had a lot of different life changes, career changes, and one of the original ones was photography. So I'm looking forward to having the opportunity to make something in a medium I understand.

**Interview with Karen Kirkland:**

**Q: How many years were you at CVU?**
**A:** 17 years.

**Q: What did you enjoy during your time here?**
**A:** I have loved getting to know my students each year. I truly believe every person can do math in their own way, and I enjoy finding out what makes everyone tick, such as what they value, in what ways they excel, and what their aspirations are. I also think the CVU community is very, very special. I loved Winter Carnival when everyone got on the gym floor and danced - faculty, staff and students. I've also enjoyed being part of musical groups and performing with students in pit orchestras, holiday bands, and going on band field trips to NYC and Boston.

**Q: What are you most proud of?**
**A:** I think my RISE session is very valuable. It's designed to help students learn the importance of understanding money and how to use it to achieve freedom to make life choices. I'm also proud of being the class advisor during Covid. We organized the "Sweets and Treats" senior event, which brought everyone together since remote learning began. We were able to have an in-person graduation at the Champlain Fair Grounds. It makes me really happy when students tell me they loved their math class this year, and that they learned a lot and enjoyed coming to class.

**Q: What classes did you teach?**
**A:** I taught math classes, both in Nichols core and outside of the core. My favorite

*Continued on page 5*

# Teacher interviews

*Continued from page 4*

subjects are geometry and statistics, but I've loved teaching all of them!

**Q: Any advice for new teachers?**
**A:** Get enough sleep! Get to know your students holistically. Bring your subject to life! Know that you matter to your students and your colleagues. If you feel overwhelmed, find support with your colleagues, and watch some of the social media reels made by teachers - they're hysterical, and allow you to laugh at some of the frustrating things that happen every day.

**Q: What are you looking forward to most after leaving CVU?**
**A:** Many things are on my bucket list! I love reading and have a huge stack of books, including an armload from our librarians. I'll play my trombone and sew. I'll still be at L.L.Bean as the "people" store Lead. I'll visit my family all around the country. I'd love to tutor AP Statistics and sub at CVU. Oh, and I'll enjoy my mornings with my coffee and playing NYT games, thinking about my math department friends playing without me.

**Q: Any other thoughts?**
**A:** People, please take care of this place! Let's all pitch in to bring it back to its previous fine luster. And of course, take care of each other and yourself.