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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CVTC Nursing Ceremony a Family Affair

Many graduates balanced school with child rearing responsibilities

River Falls, WI – Jessica Christensen felt a sense of great accomplishment and relief Monday, Dec. 16 when she received her Nursing pin during a ceremony at Chippewa Valley Technical College’s River Falls campus.

“This was the hardest thing I’ve ever done in my life,” Christensen, 39, said of completing the Nursing-Associate Degree program at CVTC. “It was exhausting, but I did it.”

It wasn’t just the challenging coursework that made the experience difficult. Christensen has three children, ages 7, 15 and 18 at home and continued to work fulltime as a CNA and part-time as an EMT while commuting to CVTC from Clear Lake. But Christensen wasn’t the only one among the 17 Nursing graduates with such a story to tell.

The December 2019 class of CVTC River Falls Nursing program graduates gathered as a group for the last time for the traditional ceremony in which each receives a pin emblematic of the school where they received their training. The graduates were among the 325 graduates in 40 programs, including 77 in Nursing, honored at the CVTC fall commencement held in Eau Claire Tuesday, Dec. 17, though not all the River Falls graduates made the trip.

One who did attend the Eau Claire ceremony was Laura Hakes, 25, of River Falls, who also has three children at home, a 3-year-old and a set of 2-year-old twins.

“It’s been hard,” Hakes said of the challenge of balancing school with family life. “My parents helped a lot with child care.”

Hakes had been working for four years as an LPN at a clinic in Woodbury, Minn. and a long-term care facility in New Richmond. Now, as she becomes a registered nurse, Hakes has accepted a position at Mayo Clinic Health System in Eau Claire and will be commuting there from River Falls.

Michael White of South St. Paul, Minn. has also been working as an LPN for years and wanted to finish his training to become an RN. He chose CVTC.

“They recognized pretty much everything I had done at that point,” said White, who was able to complete the associate degree program in two semesters because of the credit transfer. “It was a bit of a drive, but it was worth it.”

White also had parental and work responsibilities while he was going to school. He and his wife, Katelyn, have a 13-month-old daughter.

“I’ve been working at the VA hospital in Minneapolis for the past nine years, and I’ll continue to work there,” White said.

The Nursing graduates chose who would have the honor of presenting them with their pins, and the choices were heavily family-focused. Katelyn White pinned her husband; Hakes selected her mother, Tami Durand; and Christensen chose her significant other, Walter Messer.

Chas Young, a native of Medford, Wis., now living in Woodbury, Minn. was chosen as the student speaker. She was pinned by her mother-in-law, Rachel Domagala. Young’s message to her classmates focused on the family-like feeling of their time together.

“Nursing school is where I met some of the most precious people in my life,” Young said. “I truly had no clue that I would make so many close friends in such a short amount of time.”

With over 155 programs offered both online and on-campus, Chippewa Valley Technical College delivers superior, progressive technical education which improves the lives of students, meets the workforce needs of the region, and strengthens the community. CVTC programs are designed with input of business and industry to prepare graduates for today’s jobs, with 95 percent employed within six months of graduation and associate degree graduates earning an average annual salary of \$46,816.

Cutlines:

Hakes photo:

CVTC Nursing program graduate Laura Hakes receives her nursing pin from her mother, Tami Durand, at the River Falls campus Dec. 16.

Christensen photo

CVTC Nursing program graduate Jessica Christensen receives her nursing pin from her significant other, Walter Messer, at the River Falls campus Dec. 16.

Runge photo:

Chas Young, a CVTC Nursing program graduate originally from Medford, receives her nursing pin from her mother-in-law, Rachel Domagala, at the River Falls campus Dec. 16.

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