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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Mark Gunderman, Communications Specialist  
Chippewa Valley Technical College  
Desk: 715-831-7288  
Cell: 715-210-4714  
[mgunderman1@cvtc.edu](mailto:mgunderman1@cvtc.edu)

## **Cancer Survivor Starts New Lease on Life at CVTC** *Colfax's Portia Maves realizes dream of becoming a motorcycle mechanic*

**Eau Claire, WI** –Portia Maves rang the bell three times, signaling the end of a struggle and the start of a new chapter in her life.

“When you have your last treatment of chemo and are cancer-free, you ring a bell three times,” said Portia, who reached that milestone on July 5, 2018 at Mayo Clinic Health System in Eau Claire. “I was so excited to ring that bell. I had been going to treatments every three weeks for a year.”

Less than two months later, Portia became a student at Chippewa Valley Technical College. Tonight, a little more than a year later, she graduates into a new career as a motorcycle mechanic, fulfilling a lifelong dream. Portia, 36, was chosen as the student speaker for CVTC's summer commencement ceremony set for 4:30 p.m. today at Eau Claire Memorial High School.

“My parents always wanted me to go to college right out of high school, but my mom didn't want me to go into a profession that's hard on the body,” said Portia, a 2001 graduate of Colfax High School. Although Portia had already developed a love of motorcycles, she understood her mom's message.

So Portia chose CVTC's Nursing-Associate Degree program and started working as a CNA while going to school. She got married and chose to leave school to start a family. Through the birth of three children, Portia worked night shifts at a nursing home to help support her family.

“When my youngest child was 6, I was diagnosed with breast cancer,” Portia said. “It was very, very scary. I had surgeries and they removed it and I went through a year of chemotherapy.”

Today, Portia has a new tattoo on the inside of her right arm, declaring “Attitude is Everything.” They were words she lived by as she fought cancer.

“Being diagnosed with cancer is an extreme, life-changing, scary, scary thing. If you're going to feel sorry for yourself, you're not going to get better. I had the attitude that I'm going to beat this. I feel that it made me feel better. I had to be strong for my kids; I had to be strong for my husband, and that's a heavy weight on someone's shoulders. But if you're going to feel sorry for yourself, then you're only going to feel sicker.

“Cancer made me realize you only live one time, and you have to do what you love to do,” Portia said. “When I finished my chemotherapy, I said to my husband, ‘you know, I’ve always dreamed of being a motorcycle mechanic.’ ”

Jim Maves gave Portia his full support to go back to CVTC and fulfill her dream. She applied to CVTC online right away and started the Motorcycle, Marine, and Outdoor Power Products Technician program a few weeks later.

“I was really scared to come back to school because I was never good at school, but I’m a hands-on learner, so that I had going for me.” Portia said.

The only woman in the class, she approached instructor Rick Polzer. “When I started the first day, I told Rick that my goal is to be the top in this class. Rick saw my potential and helped push me toward my goal.”

She finished with a perfect 4.0 grade point average.

“My classmates were very supportive,” Portia said. “They didn’t treat me any differently or single me out because I was the only female in the program. At CVTC, I’ve learned that age and gender don’t matter.”

Portia is already working in the parts department of the Harley-Davidson dealership in Chippewa Falls.

“Harley-Davidson was my dream,” she said. “I wanted to work for them for many years. When I applied, I didn’t expect to get an interview immediately, but the manager sat down to talk with me. He really liked my drive and said he wanted me as part of his team.”

Portia expects that the dealership will soon move her into a technician’s role after the graduation. Someday she hopes to go to Milwaukee for further training at company headquarters.

She has remained healthy during her studies and as she starts her new career. “I am basically in remission right now. You have to be free of cancer for 10 years to say you are cured. It has been two years for me.”

Portia is one of 143 graduates in 27 programs to be honored at the ceremony. She is one of seven graduates in the Motorcycle, Marine, and Outdoor Power Products Technician program. The largest program is Radiography with 21 graduates, followed by Nursing-Associate Degree with 20 and Diagnostic Medical Sonography with 15.

With over 97 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:

Photo 1

Portia Maves poses with a Harley-Davidson motorcycle she worked on at the CVTC Marine, Motorcycle and Outdoor Power Products Technician program lab. After surviving breast cancer, Maves decided to pursue a lifelong dream to become a motorcycle mechanic. She was one of seven graduates on the program honored at the CVTC Summer Commencement Thursday, Aug. 1.

Photo 2

Portia Maves works on a Harley-Davidson motorcycle at the CVTC Marine, Motorcycle and Outdoor Power Products Technician program lab. After surviving breast cancer, Maves decided to pursue a lifelong dream to become a motorcycle mechanic. She was one of seven graduates on the program honored at the CVTC Summer Commencement Thursday, Aug. 1.

Photo 3

After a year of chemotherapy that ended with her being cancer-free, Portia Maves added a new tattoo of the words she lived by during her battle.

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