



Shawsheen Valley Technical High School's Sarah Johansen Named Sole Massachusetts CTE student in 2024 U.S. Presidential Scholars Cohort

BILLERICA, MA – Shawsheen Valley Technical High School is proud to announce that Sarah Jane Johansen has been named the sole Massachusetts Career and Technical Education (CTE) student to be recognized as a 2024 U.S. Presidential Scholar. U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona revealed the prestigious list on May 9th, selecting Sarah as one of only 161 recipients from a pool of over 5,700 candidates nationwide.

Secretary Cardona emphasized the significance of this achievement stating, "The 60th anniversary [cohort] of the U.S. Presidential Scholars represents the best [students] in our nation's schools... On behalf of President Biden, I am delighted to celebrate their accomplishments, and encourage these scholars to continue to aim high, lift up others, and embrace opportunities to lead."

Sarah, a senior in Shawsheen's Electronics/Engineering program and resident of Billerica, expressed gratitude and surprise at her selection, saying, "Being named a Presidential Scholar, especially at this time of year, is a nice finale to my high school journey. I have worked hard for my education, and this award has proven to me that the hard work was worth it."

Reflecting on her CTE journey Sarah shared, "My experience at Shawsheen has been amazing, especially because of the vocational education I received. My engineering teachers are fabulous; they've taught me so much about the field. Also, being able to participate in the cooperative education program and working at Diversified Technologies, has been monumental as it has offered me real-world experience at such a young age."

Sarah credits her career aspirations to her time at Shawsheen, highlighting the influence of dedicated instructors and staff. She underscores the invaluable opportunities and hands-on experience she acquired, which affirmed her decision to pursue a degree in mathematics with the goal of teaching high school math.

Tanya Baron, Sarah's primary engineering instructor and mentor, praised her exemplary dedication to the rigorous CTE curriculum, highlighting her proficiency across various disciplines from mechanics to computer programming. "Although I believe that Sarah would be successful in any career field," she said, "I'm absolutely convinced that she has the makings of an extraordinary engineer."

Baron shared that Sarah has mastered the ability to study and research concepts, then design, build, test, and improve prototypes within constraints. She has studied mechanics, pneumatics/hydraulics, structural systems, strength of materials, computer programming, laser engraving, mechatronics, applied thermal science, electronics, robotics, rapid prototyping, CADD, injection molding/vacuum forming, and automation.

Principal Jess Cook praised Sarah's intelligence, drive, and character, highlighting her role as a student leader and advocate for student welfare within the Shawsheen community. "Sarah is a strong voice for our student population, and she uses that voice for the betterment of all students in our school."



Sarah's achievements span far beyond her recent recognition as a Presidential Scholar. Alongside being honored as Shawsheen's Outstanding Vocational Student of the Year, an award endorsed by the Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrators (MAVA), she distinguished herself as a contender for Valedictorian, ultimately securing an impressive 3rd position in her class. Sarah's active involvement in various organizations at Shawsheen underscores her dedication to leadership and service, evident in her roles as secretary for the National Honor Society, elected student delegate to the School Committee, and elected member of the Student Cabinet. Furthermore, she secured membership in the esteemed National Technical Honor Society, assumes the role of president for the Teen Dating Violence Awareness Club, co-captains the Orientation Leaders program, and contributes to the Math Club. Sarah's commitment extends to athletics and community engagement, highlighted by her role as co-captain of the varsity tennis team and her position as a swimming instructor for Shawsheen's community pool.

Reflecting on her high school journey, Sarah stated, "One thing I learned during high school is that anything is possible. Four years ago, I would have never expected to be who I am today. I have proven to myself that I can do anything, as long as I put my mind to it."

Amanda Samaha, Sarah's school counselor, reflected on the bittersweet nature of Sarah's upcoming graduation. She expressed strong confidence in Sarah's future success, saying, "I have no doubt that Sarah will seize every opportunity available in college and beyond. She thrives on engaging in positive endeavors, especially those that involve helping others."

The Presidential Scholars Class of 2024 recognition program, to be held virtually this summer, will honor Sarah's exceptional achievements on a national stage. As she embarks on the next chapter of her journey, Sarah remains an example of inspiration for current and future generations of students at Shawsheen Tech and in the greater career and technical education community.

About Shawsheen Valley Regional Vocational Technical School District

Established in 1965, Shawsheen Valley Regional Vocational Technical School District (SVRVTSD) stands as a beacon of educational excellence, placing students at the center of its mission. Proudly serving the communities of Billerica, Bedford, Burlington, Tewksbury, and Wilmington, Shawsheen caters to the diverse needs of over 1,300 students in grades 9-12.

Dedicated to the pursuit of excellence in education, Shawsheen seamlessly integrates academics with a dynamic range of over 20 vocational-technical career pathways. Located in Billerica, Massachusetts, Shawsheen's expansive 100-acre campus hosts an exceptional school building adorned with high-end and industry relevant equipment, athletic fields, twenty-four varsity sports, and a plethora of extra-curricular clubs and activities.

With a passionate faculty and staff, Shawsheen remains committed to its mission: "to provide a positive learning experience in a safe educational environment that encourages all students to reach their full potential, emphasizes the value of a strong work ethic, and prepares them for adult life in a competitive world."



Beyond its traditional academic offerings, Shawsheen Valley Technical School extends its educational reach through Adult Education, Afterschool Enrichment Programs, Community-focused Events, and Summer Programs. The district continually strives to expand its rich and diverse programming, embracing the belief that education is a lifelong, continuous process with numerous paths leading to a successful and fulfilling life.