

AUG 2024

RAMS MONTHLY



STORIES OF STUDENT SUCCESS AND LEARNING AT VICTOR VALLEY COLLEGE



WELCOME TO RAMS COUNTRY!

VVC kicks off a new semester for the 2024 - 2025 school year

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Building Futures: VVC's 18th CARP Graduation Lays the Foundation for Success



In July 2024, Victor Valley College (VVC) proudly hosted its 18th annual ceremony to celebrate the achievements of students who completed the Construction Apprenticeship Readiness Program (CARP). The event brought together nearly 100 attendees, including students, family members, building trade representatives, and college supporters, to honor the hard work and dedication of the 23 students who successfully finished the summer program.

The Construction Apprenticeship Readiness Program is funded through the California Apprenticeship Initiative, administered by the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office. For seven years, CARP has played a pivotal role in transforming high school students interested in construction into skilled students ready to enter the field.

"After just nine months of specialized follow-on training at VVC, these young women and men are ready to enter high-paying careers as Electricians, Heating and Air Conditioning Technicians, Plumbers, and Carpenters," said VVC Construction Technology Instructor Anthony Bonato, a key figure in the program. He emphasized the growing demand for these skills in the area, noting that several multi-

billion-dollar construction projects, including the Silverwood Project, BNSF expansion, and high-speed rail to Las Vegas, are set to transform the high desert.

Throughout the course, students gained a comprehensive understanding of construction fundamentals, including safety protocols, career opportunities in the industry, and hands-on learning experiences. These skills were put to the test as students planned and constructed large storage units, which will be used either on campus or by community members. In addition to their classroom and on-site work, students had the opportunity to visit various union training centers across San Bernardino and Riverside counties, gaining valuable insights from industry professionals. The program's success was further highlighted by the certifications students earned upon completion, including OSHA/Safety, CPR First Aid, North American Building Trades Union credentials, and college credits.

VVC's Construction Apprenticeship Readiness Program continues to be a vital stepping stone for students aiming to enter the construction industry. As Bonato noted, "These students are developing the right skills at the right time and have bright futures ahead of them in lucrative

and local work that will last the rest of this decade and into the next." This year's ceremony not only celebrated the achievements of the 23 graduates but also underscored the college's commitment to providing practical, career-focused education that directly benefits the local community.



WELLNESS MONTH

August is National Wellness Month, the ideal time to focus on your well-being as you manage college life. Here are some key wellness practices to help you thrive on campus:

1. Practice Mindfulness
Amidst the demands of classes and social life, take brief moments for mindfulness—deep breathing, a short walk, or simply sitting quietly. These small breaks can reduce stress and sharpen your focus.

2. Build Social Connections
Strong social ties are crucial. Engage in campus clubs, attend events, or connect with friends. These relationships offer emotional support and enrich your college experience.

3. Stay Active
Regular exercise is vital. Utilize the campus gym, join a sports team, or take daily walks. Physical activity boosts your mood and keeps you healthy.

4. Eat Well
Prioritize nutritious meals to maintain your energy and focus. Explore healthy dining options on campus or bring your own snacks like fruits and nuts.

5. Embrace Self-Care
Incorporate self-care into your routine, whether it's a skincare ritual, journaling, or leisure reading. These practices help you relax and recharge.

Remember, wellness is a continuous journey. By integrating these practices into your daily life, you'll set the foundation for a healthier, happier college experience.



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VVC: 'Caring Campus' Initiative Sparks Transformation and Growth

Victor Valley College (VVC) has experienced a significant transformation by integrating Caring Campus principles and strategies across its campus. This initiative has profoundly impacted the college's culture, enrollment, and community engagement, positioning VVC as a model for other higher education institutions. The Institute for Evidence-Based Change (IEBC) developed the Caring Campus initiative to equip colleges and universities with the tools and resources needed to establish a welcoming campus culture. This program aims to improve student retention, persistence, and success by fostering a supportive environment.

"Caring Campus has helped to redefine what it means to be a part of Victor Valley College," said Dr. Dan Walden, VVC President. "Our culture has really come alive and can be seen everywhere. Our campus is extremely vibrant, and faculty, staff, students, and community members can feel that difference." The results of VVC's cultural shift are particularly evident in the college's enrollment growth. Despite a 20% drop in enrollment during the COVID-19 pandemic, VVC has rebounded with a 50% increase over the past two years. Dr. Walden credits the Caring Campus initiative as a contributing factor to this resurgence. "The culture of our college has shifted to one where people go out of their way for others," he said. "We don't want students chasing us down for help; we want to meet them at the door and ask how we can help. We've done hundreds of things to show this is a caring campus and that we truly care for every student."

One strategy VVC has implemented is the Connect2Success call center, providing students, employees, and community members with a direct line to get their questions answered. In the 2022-23 school year, student service specialists handled more than 60,000 phone calls, achieving a 90% first-call resolution rate, with the remaining 10% resolved through follow-up calls.

VVC's efforts extend into the community, with counselors placed in 35 high schools to guide and support students as they plan their futures. In the 2022-23 academic year, 70% of graduating seniors in California's high desert completed the FAFSA and applied to

VVC, resulting in 40% of them enrolling at the college. VVC is also proud of its on-campus Engagement Centers, which offer events, guest speakers, and support for students. "We had a student come into our STEM Engagement Center who was initially enrolled in just one math class and was quite nervous about his performance," said Todd Scott, VVC Vice President of Instruction. "After a conversation with our supportive staff, he felt encouraged to take on a full course load and he ended up becoming a 4.0 engineering student. That staff member's encouragement and belief in him made all the difference in his success."

This spirit of care and support extends beyond academic achievements. VVC's culture is encapsulated by a story in which the campus community, including maintenance staff, other employees, and students, came together to free a goose entangled in fishing line. Such acts of kindness demonstrate the collective commitment to helping one another, ensuring that no one—whether a student or a creature in need—is left without support.

"Victor Valley College's success with Caring Campus is a testament to what can be achieved when an institution truly commits to a culture of care," said Dr. Brad Phillips, CEO of IEBC. "We are proud to see VVC institutionalize Caring Campus into its campus culture and become a model for other colleges nationwide."

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VVC Alum Ignites New Leadership as Victorville Fire Chief

Bobby Clemmer has sit down interview with RAMS Monthly!



The Victorville Fire Department has recently welcomed a new leader at its helm—Chief Bobby Clemmer, a VVC alum and a seasoned first responder with over two decades of experience. Clemmer, who officially took on the role in May 2024, brings a deep-rooted connection to the High Desert and a passion for serving his community.

A Journey of Dedication

Clemmer's journey to becoming Fire Chief began in 2002 when he started as a firefighter in Barstow. Raised in Barstow and Apple Valley, Clemmer's first job was at DiNapoli's, a firehouse-themed Italian restaurant in Apple Valley run by a firefighting family. The irony of his first job was not lost on him, as it foreshadowed his future career.

Clemmer attended the Paramedic Academy at Victor Valley College before moving on to a fire academy at a neighboring college. His career as a firefighter officially began in Barstow, where he served from 2002 to 2007. He steadily worked his way up the ranks, becoming an

engineer in 2007. In 2013, he transferred to Apple Valley, where he was promoted to Fire Captain. By the winter of 2023, Clemmer had joined the Victorville Fire Department as a Battalion Chief. His dedication and leadership skills were quickly recognized, leading to his promotion to Deputy Chief in November 2023 and finally to Fire Chief in May 2024.

Looking Ahead: Strategic Planning and Community Safety

As the new Chief, Clemmer has ambitious plans for the Victorville Fire Department. He shared that the department is currently exploring strategic planning with a consultant to evaluate services and improvements over the next five years. A key focus will be on upgrading the department's fleet, with new vehicles including three fire engines, a tiller truck, a water tender, and three paramedic squads expected to join the fleet.

Clemmer is also committed to strengthening the department's arson program. He pointed out that some of the most common causes

of fires in the area stem from homeless encampments and fireworks. In fact, the past 4th of July was the busiest on record for Victorville, though not primarily due to fireworks. The department has been actively cracking down on illegal fireworks, leading to a significant decrease in reports— According to the city, Victorville had 2,479 firework reports in 2020. That fell to just 652 in 2024. During the most recent holiday, 53 citations were issued, and hundreds of illegal fireworks were seized.

On July 4th alone, the department responded to 101 incidents or 911 calls for service. Victorville Fire had in total only 29 calls related to fireworks on the holiday, which included mutual aid in the city of Adelanto.

Evolving Challenges and Community Outreach

Clemmer's 20 years in firefighting have given him a unique perspective on how fires have evolved. He noted that modern materials, often synthetic, are more flammable, increasing the risk of fire. Beyond firefighting, Clemmer is also focused on community outreach.

The department is actively involved in local organizations such as Kiwanis and the Greater High Desert Chamber of Commerce, as well as participating in school visits, city events, and advisory committees for medic and fire programs.

Clemmer is deeply concerned about the mental health challenges faced by firefighters. He acknowledged that the leading causes of death among firefighters include cancer, heart attacks, PTSD, and suicide. According to the U.S. Fire Administration, the number of firefighters dying by suicide continues to climb as they suffer from behavioral health issues, including PTSD, stemming from their work. Studies show that around 20% of firefighters and paramedics experience PTSD at some point in their careers, compared to 6.8% in the general population.

A Personal Mission

With McKenzie as his guiding inspiration, Chief Bobby Clemmer is set to lead the Victorville Fire Department into a future of growth, safety,

and community engagement. When asked why he continues in the demanding field of firefighting after all these years, Clemmer didn't hesitate. "It's because of McKenzie," he said, referring to his late daughter. "She wanted to be a firefighter. She was always the one that had the most interest in my job. When I'm here, she gives me purpose to keep going."



Firefighting & Mental Health



The mental health issues faced by first responders are finally receiving attention. In 2022, Congress passed the Public Safety Officer Support Act (PL 117-172), which extends the Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) program to include coverage for officers who die by suicide under specific conditions or suffer permanent disability from traumatic self-inflicted injuries. This act recognizes the severe impact of post-traumatic stress (PTS) on firefighters, who endure intense stress and trauma. However, further action is required.

Firefighters experience PTS at rates comparable to military veterans. An August 2016 study found that about 20 percent of firefighters and paramedics face PTS during their careers, compared to a 6.8 percent lifetime risk in the general population. Firefighter suicides are estimated at 100 per year, with a rate of 18 per 100,000, higher than the general public's 13 per 100,000.

To tackle this crisis, the federal government should enhance support beyond existing legislation. It is vital to fund peer-supported mental health programs in fire departments and provide resources for healthcare providers to address PTS. Collecting accurate data on PTS and suicide in the fire service is crucial for developing effective interventions.

The FBI's Law Enforcement Suicide Data Collection, launched in 2022, is a positive development, but similar efforts must include firefighters. Ensuring that first responders receive adequate mental health support is essential. Prioritizing mental health awareness and culturally competent care can help prevent further tragedies among our nation's firefighters.

VVC ATHLETICS: Lady Ram Volleyball Ready for First Season Under Coach Ong



The Victor Valley College Lady Ram Volleyball team is gearing up for an exciting 2024 season under the leadership of new Head Coach Peter Ong. With a mix of key returners and talented newcomers, Coach Ong is looking forward to seeing what this team can accomplish on the court.

Key returners for the Lady Rams include Libero Shamichah Rensulat, Setter Krystal Shurtliff, and Outside Hitter Noelia Maldonado. These experienced players will provide leadership and stability for the team as they navigate the challenges of a new season.

In addition to the returning players, Coach Ong is excited about the potential of the team's key newcomers. Outside Hitter Alayja Hall, Middle Hitter Elissa Otwell, Libero Mariah Gardner, and Outside Hitter Samantha Ponce bring fresh talent and energy to the team, adding depth to the roster and increasing competition for starting positions.

Coach Ong has high expectations for his first season as head coach, emphasizing the importance of improvement and growth

throughout the season. His goal is for the team to be better than they were last season, pushing themselves to reach new heights and achieve success on the court.

One thing that Coach Ong is particularly excited about is the camaraderie and teamwork that he sees among the players. He believes that the bond between the girls will be a key factor in their success, as they work together towards a common goal and support each other both on and off the court.

As the Lady Rams prepare for the upcoming season, Coach Ong is confident that this group of talented and dedicated players has what it takes to make a strong impact in the conference. With a new coach, new team, new demeanor, and new expectations, the Victor Valley College Lady Ram Volleyball team is ready to take on the competition and showcase their skills in the 2024 season.

The Lady Rams have their annual alumni match this Friday August 23rd at 5:00pm. The first official game of the season is an away game August 31st vs LA Mission College.

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VVC ATHLETICS: Ram Football Holds First Practice of 2024 Season



The Victor Valley College Ram football team kicked off their 2024 season with their first practice under the leadership of second year Head Coach David Slover. In Slover's second season at the helm, he is filled with excitement about the potential of this year's team.

One of the key reasons for Slover's optimism is the impressive class of recruits that the team has brought in for the upcoming season. These new players bring a fresh energy and talent to the team, and Slover is eager to see how they will mesh with the returning players.

Speaking of returning players, the Rams have some key sophomores who are ready to lead the team to success. Deshawn Minor, who led the Rams rushing attack last season, is expected to be a powerhouse in the backfield once again. Minor will have a solid offensive line to run behind including returning center Juan Galvez and tackle Donovan Scantelbury. Christian Macias, who averaged 14.7 yards per reception and had 3 receiving touchdowns last season, will be a key target for the Rams' quarterbacks. Devon Smith, who had 34 total tackles last season, and Andrew Olmos, who

had 17 tackles in just 5 games due to injury, will anchor the defense and provide leadership on the field.

As the team hit the field for their first practice, there was a sense of excitement and determination in the air. Players were focused and eager to prove themselves, both to their coaches and to their teammates. Coach Slover ran a high-energy practice, pushing the players to give their all and work together as a cohesive unit.

After the practice, Coach Slover spoke to the team, emphasizing the importance of hard work, dedication, and teamwork. He reminded them that they have the potential to achieve great things this season, but it will require effort and commitment from every player.

As the sun set on the first practice of the season, the Victor Valley College Rams left the field with a sense of purpose and determination. With a talented group of players and a dedicated coaching staff, the Rams are poised to make a statement in the upcoming season. Fans can look forward to an exciting

season of football as the Rams strive for success on the field.

VVC Football

September	October
7th *Vs Santa Monica 5 PM	5th @ LA Pierce College 5 PM
14th @ Clendale College 6 PM	19th @ Santa Ana College 1 PM
21st @ LA Valley College 6 PM	26th *Vs West LA 5 PM
28th *Vs Pasadena 5 PM	November
	2nd @ College of the Desert 1 PM
	9th *Vs Compton 5 PM
	16th *Vs Chaffey 5 PM

2024 Schedule




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VICTOR VALLEY COLLEGE



RAMS

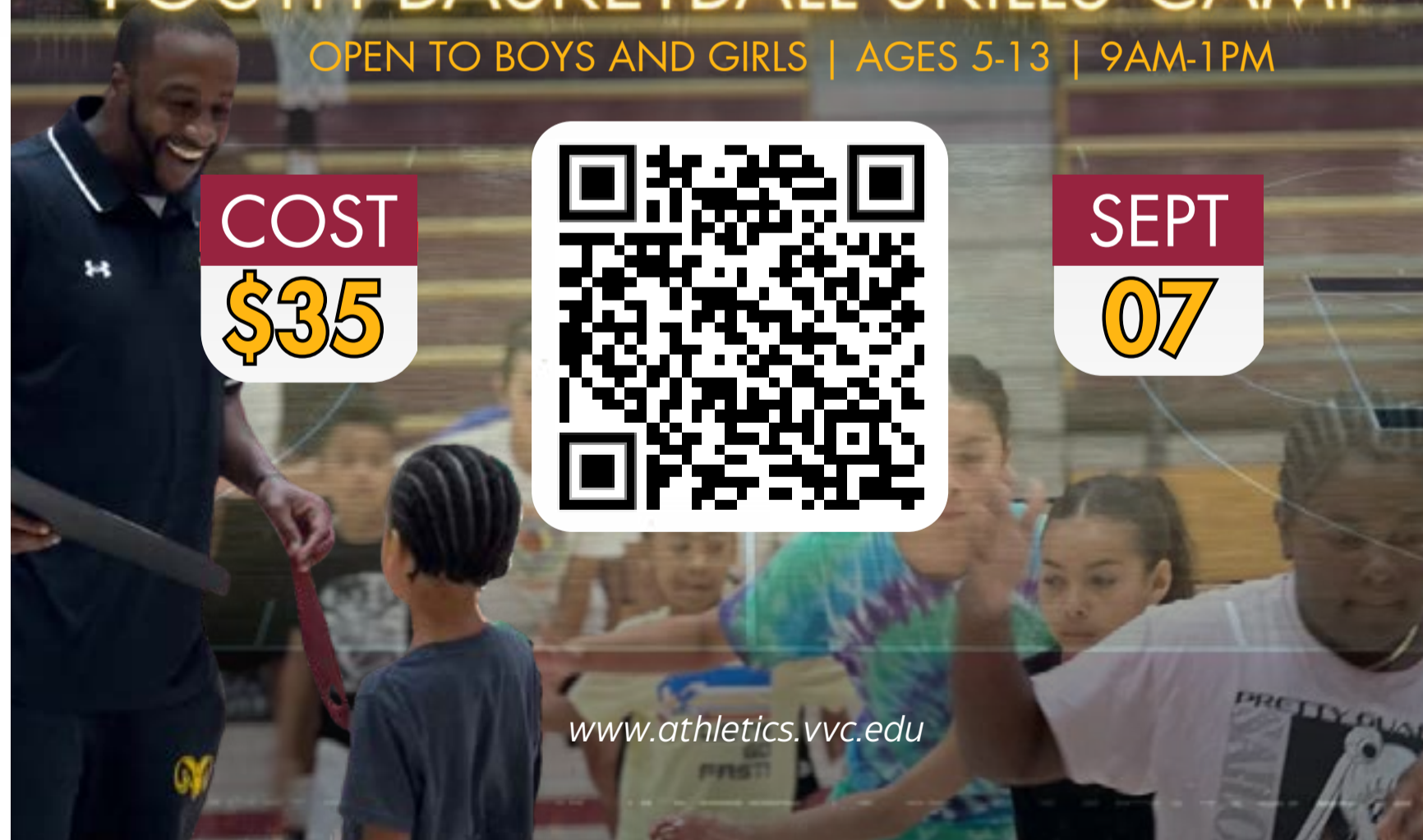
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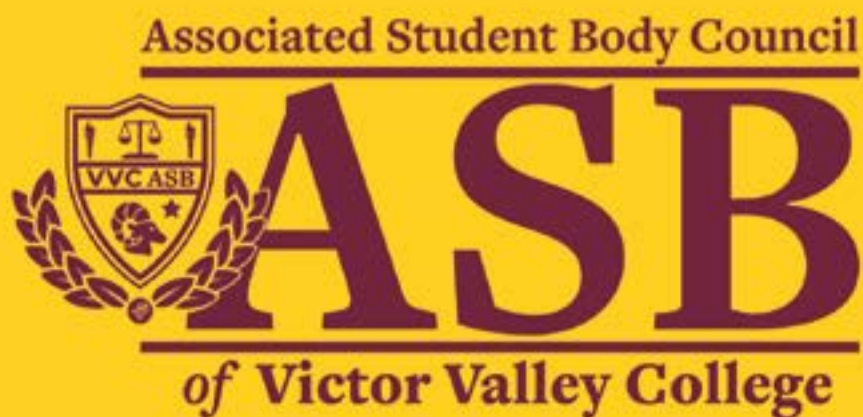


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