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Student Connection



CUYAHOGA VALLEY CAREER CENTER

Kayleis VanLeer Twinsburg



Kayleis VanLeer is a senior at Twinsburg High School and a standout student in CVCC's Automotive Technology program, led by instructor Jamie Yax. Her path to automotive technology was unexpected. "At first, I thought I wanted to go into aerospace, maybe because my dad was in the military, but the more I thought about the responsibility of people's lives being in my hands, I realized it wasn't for me. I still wanted to do something mechanical, just not on such a large scale."

That mindset shifted when she toured CVCC. "The Automotive Technology program really caught my interest. I wanted to understand the basics of how cars work before jumping into mechanics on a larger scale. One day, I saw a semi-truck on the side of the road with its hood up, and something about it stuck with me. I thought, 'Maybe I should know how cars work.'" Though initially unsure, Kayleis took the leap and she hasn't looked back. "Getting this foundation before graduating has been so valuable. Whether or not I pursued this career path, knowing how to work on cars is such a useful life skill to have."

Kayleis credits much of her personal and professional growth to Mr. Yax. "He's an incredible instructor," she says. "He's always pushing us to get involved and try new things. He's the reason I joined SkillsUSA. One day in class, he asked if anyone was interested, and when we made eye contact, he said, 'Yes, Kayleis, you're doing it.' I just said, 'Umm... okay, I guess I am!'" That spontaneous moment turned out to be the best decision. This past June, Kayleis attended the SkillsUSA National Conference in Atlanta as a delegate—an experience she describes as "Incredible! I felt so adult!" She now serves as an Executive Officer in her chapter and hopes to return to Nationals again this year. As the only girl in her Automotive Technology class, Kayleis admits it was intimidating at first. "It's gotten easier, and I really hope I'm showing other girls that they can do this too. Mr. Yax has believed in me even when I didn't believe in myself." Mr. Yax sees her potential: "Kayleis demonstrates outstanding leadership qualities. She's always ready to support her program, her home school, and CVCC as a whole. She's focused, dependable, caring, and driven. She is clearly destined for success."

Outside of CVCC, Kayleis is just as involved. She's a member of the National Society of High School Scholars (NSHSS) at Twinsburg High School, and serves as Assistant Director and President of the Drama Club, which she's been part of since 8th grade. She also plays club soccer and works at AutoZone, where she's training to become a manager. "I really enjoy working at AutoZone—my manager is fantastic, and having other women on the team makes the environment feel empowering. It's also great to apply what I'm learning at CVCC in a real-world setting."

Looking ahead, Kayleis is thrilled to announce she'll be attending University of Northwestern Ohio (UNOH) to study Diesel Technology, with a focus on Medium/Heavy Duty Diesel. "I'm so excited! I can't stop talking about it!" She also hopes to intern at Hans' Freightliner this year for her Senior Experience through Twinsburg High School. Her advice to other students? "Don't worry about what others think. If going to CVCC feels right, go for it! It's one of the best decisions I've ever made." Keep up the amazing work, Kayleis! CVCC is so proud of everything you've accomplished and can't wait to see all that you achieve this year and beyond!

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