

OV educator selected as Rowland Fellow

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DEVON KAPPAK

BRANDON — Devon Karpak, Otter Valley Union High School's Tech Ed instructor, was recently selected by the Rowland Foundation as a 2022 Rowland Fellow.

Karpak's proposal focuses on building the OV tech program and creating an exemplar curriculum and program for a CTE connected pathway for grades 7 through 12. Karpak's work on this project will be supported by the Rowland Foundation both financially and with professional development.

Each year since 2009, the Rowland Foundation has selected a cohort of educators from around Vermont to be members of their fellowship program. These educators are selected from applicants who are looking to influence positive change in their schools, take on leadership roles and push education forward through innovative programs.

This is the job description of many educators, but too often, time limitations hinder them from bringing their ideas to fruition. The Rowland Fellowship allows for schools to create time by awarding each of the fellows up to \$100,000, which can be used to hire additional personnel, meet the needs of implementation of programs for students, as well as travel and time to reflect for the Rowland Fellow instructor.

This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and a transformative experience for students, schools and educators alike, said RNESU Superintendent Jeanne Collins.

Karpak's proposal to build out the school's tech program was chosen for its unique nature. Schools like OV do not currently have opportunities for students in 7th through 10th grade to explore careers and take Pre-Tech courses. Otter Valley has been lucky enough to have kept their woodshop program active when many other schools are cutting similar programs. In fact, over the past three years Karpak and OVUHS Principal James Avery, with the support of Collins and the OVUU school board, have worked to expand the program from primarily wood working to new offerings in science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics (STEAM), as well as heavy equipment operation (in partnership with Markowski Excavating).

Planned programs to be implemented next year and in the near future include building trades with small engines (grant funded from through FFA) and welding (spurred on by a grant from the American Welding Society).

Karpak's vision is for the tech-ed program to empower students to create and connect in ways that will enable them to see a direct path to their futures and bring additional meaning and relevance to their high school careers. Additionally, he hopes to build further community partnerships that will help students see that Vermont is a great place to grow up and build a life.

Karpak plans to partner with local manufacturers and employers to assist in fully realizing this community-built program.

Finally, Karpak looks forward to not only continuing to build the program during school hours but to also open up the shop to the community. "This is an amazing opportunity for OV," said Collins, adding that Karpak is ready to work to get students further engaged.