



2023 Outstanding Adult Learner of the Year **Mallory Balch**

Mallory Balch, a former adult learner who is now an adult educator at the Valparaiso Adult Learning Center (VALC), has been named Outstanding Adult Learner of the Year.

Born to parents who struggled with substance abuse, Mallory's home environment did not foster a strong relationship with education. After being put into foster care in middle school, Mallory dropped out. Years later, Mallory gave birth to two beautiful girls of her own and worked hard to support them. Feeling overwhelmed and depressed she turned to substance abuse, and, like her parents before, Mallory lost custody of her children and found herself in jail. She realized she needed to change her life to break the pattern.

After release, Mallory began recovery from her addiction, regained custody of her daughters, and began to work as a grocery store attendant. While they were living in a homeless shelter, Mallory found out about the VALC. She was reluctant to commit to any classes with so many stressors, but she decided to give it a try.

After six weeks of intensive study, Mallory passed the high school equivalency exam on her first try. Mallory soon gained employment with Center Workforce Innovations (CWI) as a Career Pathways Facilitator, and she is now giving back to her community and the adult education program that supported her by helping and guiding other students. She often tells the students her story, giving them much-needed encouragement and motivation.

Mallory was presented with the IAACE 2022 Adult Learner of the Year award. Mallory used this as an opportunity to share her journey with over 400 adult education personnel.

Mallory attended Indiana Association for Adult and Continuing Education (IAACE) and completed COABE's Student Ambassador Training. She is a member of the Indiana Student Ambassador Council and serves as secretary. Mallory demonstrates initiative by studying online via LINCS and Aztec to improve her professional role. She serves on youth panels for workforce development events.