Merrilyn Tatarczuch-Koff began working at VSAC in 2002 with both the EOC and GEAR UP programs. While directly serving adult students in EOC, she also coordinated programming for GEAR UP’s statewide services. Merrilyn initiated, created and organized College Pathways, at first a single Saturday event on a college campus to provide free college guidance for students and families through multiple workshops and speakers, expanding to multiple events across the state to serve more people. That event has continued to grow, now serving hundreds of students and family members each spring up and down the state.

In 2016 Merrilyn was hired as director for the Vermont EOC program, which serves close to 2,000 adults across the state each year. She successfully wrote the most recent EOC grant and has successfully sought other grant funding, to serve New Americans in partnership with the Vermont Department of Labor, and to serve Afghan refugees to Vermont in partnership with the Vermont of Human Services. Merrilyn is a tireless advocate for addressing poverty, supporting the EOC staff to do their best work every day, and reaching out to people across the state to get information and resources to those who need them.

Merrilyn is inspiring to work with. She is humble, yet she does what needs to be done because she sees that someone should do it. She has worked to make sure that the Vermont state grant goes to as many Vermonters who need it with as many dollars as possible, helping to remove barriers in the application process, as one example. She has worked to get scholarships to adult and traditional students alike. Her advocacy, for example, has led to thousands of dollars in scholarships and grants for non-degree programs to enhance the lives of hundreds of Vermonters. Merrilyn has had an impact on too many people to count across Vermont, an impact that will continue for many years to come. I believe she should be recognized for the service she has provided by being recognized with the Marion Belgrade Howard award.

Submitted by Matt Beagle Bourgault