



Success Virtual Learning Center co-founders Dallas (left) and Anita Bell accept a symbolic framed first dollar from Southern Wayne County Region Chamber of Commerce President Ron Hinrichs, with Taylor Mayor Rick Sollars.

SUCCESS COMES TO TAYLOR:

Virtual Learning Centers make a difference for students

Success has come to Taylor with a virtual learning center, which works with public schools to help at-risk high school students earn credits online and on site with staff support.

Success VLC, with 23 locations throughout Michigan, helps students, age 14 to 21, complete high school credits needed to graduate, and meets Michigan Merit Curriculum requirements.

The Taylor location, 24680 Eureka, provides a physical location with computers and staff support for students, who are given laptops and a mobile hot spot to do coursework at any location, at any time.

Co-founder Dallas Bell said Success VLC served 2,700 students last year, and expects to reach 3,000 students this year.

Seven years ago, Bell was working as a special education teacher and as a reserve police officer, and he saw students who were leaving school and not making the best choices for their future.

"I thought if we could find a way to keep kids in school and help them earn their high school diploma, then they could be contributors to society," he said. "They would have a

chance to not only make a difference for their family, but for the community they live in."

They started the first virtual learning center in Greenville with 12 students, and as it grew, other communities asked for help setting up programs.

"We do the right things for the right reasons, we focus on outcomes not incomes, and we focus on what the kids need," he said. "We inspire hope because that is our mission."

Students often come to the center when they are so credit deficient that they are at risk of not graduating with their high school class. Others who left school may have a job and cannot get back into a traditional school situation without losing their source of income. Still others may have anxiety issues.

"Most of them have been out in the real world, and realize without a high school diploma it is really hard to move ahead or even make a living, and so that is why they come back," Bell said.

State funding,

known as "full time equivalency" funding, covers the cost.

Potential VLC student Alexis Watson, 17, of Taylor, said she needs a learning program that allows her to take care of her 4-month-old daughter Autumn.

Success VLC Regional Director Jamie Dunn stated the center will be open from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., and may extend its hours to 5 p.m., but students are not required to go to the building, and may work remotely. He said students work on one class at a time.

"The traditional model that you and I have gone through hasn't worked for a lot of kids," Dunn said. "We just want to let them know that there are options for them."

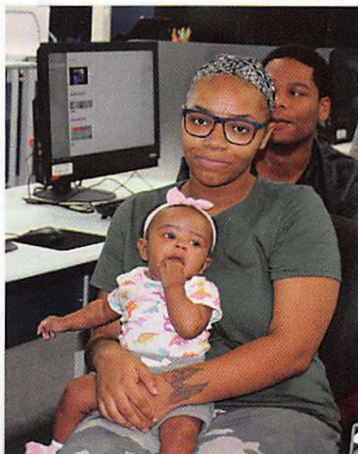
Co-founder Anita Bell said Success VLC is her passion, and it is her mission to help students.

"I always say, 'Is this the best for the kids?' and whatever that is, that is what we do," she said.

Mayor Rick Sollars said he thinks it is exciting to have the Success VLC in Taylor.

"It is a fantastic opportunity and it is a beautiful building, and they have obviously made a big commitment to the city and the program," he said. "I think it is a great start and they are going to be fantastic."

For more information about Success Virtual Learning Centers, go to successvlc.com.



Prospective student Alexis Watson hopes the center will help her earn the credit hours she needs to complete high school while caring for her 4-month-old daughter.