

Ombudsman

view

[home](#) [accounts](#) [logout](#)

audience



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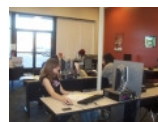
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**In this Issue:**[Center Spotlight - Fountain, Colo](#)[December Graduates](#)[Student Spotlight](#)[Students Raise Funds, Help Others](#)[Districts Showcase How OES Helps Students](#)**Center Spotlight****Fountain OES Serves Colorado Students**

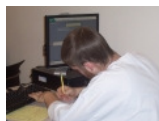
Just south of Colorado Springs and within view of Pikes Peak is the community of Fountain, which is home to Ombudsman's first center in Colorado. In addition to the majestic mountains, abundance of outdoor activities, and plentiful days of sunshine, this area also houses five military installations: Fort Carson Army Base, Peterson Air Force Base, Shriver Air Force Base, Cheyenne Mountain Operations Center (home of NORAD), and the Air Force Academy.



This center receives referrals from two different school districts. One of the districts serves students from Fort Carson, a growing Army base that has frequent deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. Thirty-eight students are currently enrolled at the Fountain center – many of them were referred by alternative high schools. The center also receives inquiries from other districts throughout the state about the Ombudsman program.

Staff members include director Lee Wade and teachers Theresa Kitazono and Katherine Pollock. Wade and Pollock were graduate students together at the University of Colorado in Colorado Springs, where they earned their master's degrees in education. Wade is the mother of 10 children and has established a great relationship with the students. Pollock, who grew up in a military family, has lived all over the world – but she loves the beauty and the climate of Colorado. Kitazono, a native New Yorker, is a former language arts teacher who is re-entering the working world after being a stay-at-home mom for the past 10 years.

Students say they like coming to Ombudsman because they can work on their own without the distractions of a large student body. In addition, many students attend classes and have full time jobs, so the schedule helps them to accommodate both school and work.

[\(back to top\)](#)**December Graduates Make Plans for the Future**

More than 103 Ombudsman students graduated high school in December. Here's a snapshot of the graduates and their plans for the future.

Colerain, Ohio - Daniel Kaiser wants to become a firefighter and plans to attend Cincinnati State Technical and Community College. Joshua Partridge plans to attend the University of Cincinnati.

Vidalia, Ga. - Cayla Knight plans to start college next semester, while Billy Bunn is looking for a job.

Liberty Central, Ga. - Antonio Stewart graduated in December.

Potosi, Mo. - Andrea Patterson plans to start college this fall. During her time at Ombudsman, Andrea has reached many milestones. She was student of the month in October and completed the first semester with 99 percent attendance. She also made the high honor roll at the Potosi High School during the first semester. She was a pleasure to have in class and was a great role model for other students.

Shawnee Mission, Kan. - Elizabeth Gannon didn't have enough credits to graduate with her class, and, instead of getting a GED, she attended Ombudsman for one semester to complete her education. She is currently enrolled at Johnson County Community College and plans to transfer to a four-year college when she completes her associate's degree. Liz often encouraged the younger students to stay in class. She said it was hard when she didn't graduate with her class, but she is so glad she came back to school for one semester to earn her district diploma.

Gurnee, Ill. - Roman Watkins has been taking classes at the College of Lake County, where he has attained sophomore status. Nick Collori plans to attend College of Lake County. Nick Seamon also graduated in December.

Bloomingtondale, Ill. - Aramis Beachem endured a couple setbacks, but returned to Ombudsman, where he completed the requirements for his district diploma. He's currently enrolled in technical school to earn his certification in heating and air conditioning.

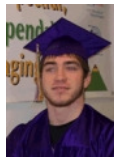
Downers Grove, Ill. - Several graduates plan to attend the College of DuPage. Rich Ortega (Dist. 8204) plans to become an EMT. Sarah Byrne (Dist. 87) is studying general education and is interested in becoming a social worker. Ed Berdowski (Dist. 8204), is working on his heating and air conditioning certification; Allen Lencioni (Private) is studying for his real estate certification and plans to go to business or law school. Sigmund Grant (Dist. 99), wants to be a diesel mechanic, Jake Lombardo (Dist. 203) is training to be a welder; Eric Rivera (Dist. 87), is learning computer technology - and planning his wedding! Ross Millette (Dist. 88), Tyre Jackson (Dist. 87), Anthony Guzman (Dist. 87) and Albert Munoz (Dist. 87) are also attending College of DuPage. They may be joined by Ed McCarthy (Dist. 201) if he can't join the Navy due to his bad eyesight.

[\(back to the top\)](#)

Student Spotlight

Joe Overcomes Obstacles to Complete High School

When Joe graduated from Waukegan, Ill., High School in January, he completed a goal few adults in his life believed possible. Joe is a bright young man, but many people thought his criminal history would keep him from finishing high school.



Joe was diagnosed with ADHD at the age of four. He was later diagnosed with depression, then re-diagnosed with bipolar disorder. He has always had an Individualized Education Plan. As a result of his legal issues, Joe enrolled in the Ombudsman center in Waukegan. While court dates, side effects of prescription medications and challenges managing his anger caused Joe to miss class frequently, he did well when he was in attendance. Joe had one of the highest grade point averages of students at his learning center and he displayed a keen interest in art and music.

While at Ombudsman, Joe's behavior improved - until a poor choice resulted in jail. Incarceration would have ended Joe's high school career and ruined any opportunity to graduate. But Ombudsman staff saw Joe's potential and transferred him to the OES Homebound Through the Center program. Center staff created Joe's Learning Contracts, and gave him required assignments. Joe's lawyer delivered the assignments to Joe in jail, and Joe returned the completed work to the center when he was released in December.

In January, Joe finished his final requirements for graduation from Waukegan High School. The high school staff was very proud of Joe's accomplishment and Joe was photographed in his cap and gown.

With his legal troubles resolved and his high school education completed, Joe's anger issues have quieted and he plans to work for several months, then attend the College of Lake County in the fall. Ultimately, he wants to be a lawyer.

[\(back to the top\)](#)



Students Raise Funds, Help Others

Ombudsman students care about their communities and are encouraged to become involved in charity events and fundraisers. Here are highlights of some Ombudsman student activities this past holiday season.

The students at **William Penn Center in Collingdale, Penn.**, collected and donated 150 canned and non-perishable foods this year. The food was donated to the New Life Temple Church in Lansdowne, Penn., which is within the center's school district. The students' collaboration with New Life and its bishop, Robert Johnson, has made the students proud of their contributions to people in need within their own community.

Students in all three sessions at the **Manchester, N.H., Center** had a competition to see who could bring in the most food items for donation to the New Hampshire Food Bank. Together, students donated 112 pounds of food.

Students at the **Potosi, Mo., Center** adopted a family through the local health department and collected toys, warm coats and shoes for their family at Christmas.

The **Raymore, Mo., Center** students had penny wars, with each session competing against the others to donate the most change. They raised \$200 and used it to pay utility bills for families in need in their district.

Districts Showcase how OES Helps Students

School districts showcase how they partner with OES to serve at-risk students - and increase their graduation rates. For more information about how you can attend a "Lunch & Learn" meeting with school districts, contact Diana Shaffer dshaffer@esa-education.com or 847-247-6624.

We have the following lunch and learns scheduled for February and March:

- Westwood, Mich. - Feb. 27
- Coffee County, Ga., - March 5

[\(back to the top\)](#)

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