

five questions...

Linda Mappes is the executive director of Vanderheyden, a Wynantskill-based nonprofit agency that has, for 175 years, provided vital services to tens of thousands of children, individuals and families in the Capital District.

Q: How do you reflect on 175 years of providing at-risk children an opportunity to have quality education and a safe place to call home?

A: From its very beginning as the Benevolent Society of Troy, people committed to our community have chosen to care for their own, regardless of life circumstances or political will. The core of our mission today is our belief that all children and families belong together and deserve the very best our community can give them.

Q: What kinds of programs and services does Vanderheyden provide to the nearly 1,500 children and families you serve a year?

A: Vanderheyden provides residential, educational, clinical, recreational, health, life skills and respite programs for children and young adults. Children come to us from throughout our region with behavioral, emotional and developmental challenges. Our goal is that all children and families whom our services touch feel empowered to improve their own lives.

Q: You first arrived as Vanderheyden's executive director in 2002. What was it about the nonprofit agency's mission that attracted you?

A: I was moved and heartened by Vanderheyden's long history of service to this community, and saw an

organization poised and ready for change. The challenge of moving this amazing institution forward into a new era of community care really excited me.



Photo submitted
Executive Director of Vanderheyden Linda Mappes.

Q: What was the inspiration

behind Vanderheyden's new logo?

A: The happy child with outstretched arms in the form of a "V" symbolizes the feeling of success and accomplishment a child feels during his or her time with Vanderheyden.

Q: You open your doors to children and youth facing extraordinary obstacles. How gratifying is it when one of those students graduates your high school and moves on to a brighter future?

A: For many of our young people, completion of high school was considered unattainable. At our commencement exercises our auditorium is filled with the smiling, cheering faces of family members who thought the day would never come. You cannot experience such a moment without being moved.