

NEXT MONTH:

JAN 3 FIRST STUDENT DAY
JAN 3-30 INTERSESSION
JAN 15 HOLIDAY
FEB 3 PROJECT FORUM

Counselor's Corner

Exams are complete and first semester is coming to an end! I will be processing report cards when we return in January and they will be mailed home on January 5th. As you know, students will be in Intersession for the month of January. This is both a very exciting time and also often a stressful time. It's not unusual for students to think they have plenty of time to get everything done, and then wait until the last minute to actually do the work. This poor time management is often what leads to feeling stressed and overwhelmed. Please encourage your students to stay on top of their project and to pace themselves accordingly. They will feel great relief and pride once they have accomplished their project goals. Many students will also have intersession assignments to complete for their math and science courses. This is also a time when students tend to procrastinate thinking February is far away. Please encourage them to work on the assignments early so if they need assistance they have time to communicate with their teacher. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me. I hope you and your families have a wonderful holiday break.



A Whirlwind Day at the Shelly STEM Challenge

On Saturday, November 11, RVGS held its third Shelly STEM Challenge, and it was a whirlwind from start to finish! Our Lab Rats ran the gamut from breaths of fresh air to full of hot air, from easy breezy to tempests in teapots, from being blown away to blowing it. It was an entire month of Intersession, including Project Forum, crammed into 6 hours, and our students thrived under the pressure.

GE served as the school's industry partner for the event, and they opened with a short tutorial on what wind turbines are and how they work. They covered factors that impact power generation and highlighted areas typically considered in turbine design. Next, GE presented the problem: **students were challenged to design a small scale, consumer-level turbine that could generate energy from low wind speeds from multiple directions.** They instructed students to develop solutions using only math, science and technology, and to engineer their designs using only equipment and materials provided at the Challenge. The team whose turbine generated the most energy would be declared the winner of the competition.

In total, 6 teams competed in the event; 5 teams had 4 teammates and 1 had 3. Three teams were all-male, and 3 were coed, for a male/female gender split of 15 to 8. One team contained a senior/freshman brother/sister combo, but the sibling power was short-lived; at the end of the day, their team received a DNF (did not finish), but at least they didn't strangle each other somewhere along the way, so we'll count that as a W!

One team was listening to "American Pie" when I stopped in for pictures – The



Day the Music Died proving remarkably apropos – one team worked best to Britney Spears, and at least one in complete silence. Blades were made of everything from plastic to Styrofoam to balsa wood, and one set appeared to be constructed purely out of duct tape. Both types of turbines – horizontal axis (the ones that look like propellers) and vertical axis (the ones that look like egg beaters) – were represented at the competition, but the winning design was a lift type vertical axis wind turbine with paper blades.

Congratulations to "The Tau-ists" team of sophomores Henry Holbrook, Charlie Murphy, and Jonah Vanke (Patrick Henry High School) on their winning design! The team earned bragging rights, a cash prize, and recognition on a perpetual plaque. Our freshmen team, "Rain Drop," – Aaliyah Dixon, Ethan Johnson, London Paige, and Uyen Tran (William Fleming High School) – produced the second highest voltage, and sophomores "RVGS DeTURBINED to Win" – Luke Arner, Michael Lin, Jackson Moyer, and Erik Scarlatescu (Hidden Valley High School) – were third.

At the close of the day, Dr. Shelly's friend of almost 50 years, Tim Isaacs, spoke about how much RVGS meant to his friend and how the STEM Challenge would have meshed beautifully with his vision of providing unique learning opportunities for gifted students in the Roanoke Valley.

Message from the Director

If you heard a collective sigh of relief, that would be because exams are finished and we are wrapping up the first semester at RVGS! I'm proud of the hard work and dedication our students and teachers put into preparation for semester exams.

Of course, now that we are done with the first semester, we are ready for that magical time at RVGS– Intersession! In the final few days before break, students are polishing off preparations to begin their research in January. The school will be bustling with activity next month as RVGS transitions to four weeks of all day electives and dedicated experimental time. Keep an eye on our Facebook page for photos of the students completing their experiments.

As the students work on their projects, we hope that parents will take some time to collect gift cards for the Silent Auction and make donations to the Annual Appeal fundraiser. Additional information can be found on the RGS website. We greatly appreciate the support of our parents and other sponsors.

I hope everyone enjoys a safe and relaxing winter break!

Thank you to GE for providing the problem, prize money, motors, construction materials, and judges for the competition, and to Mr. Levy for his time spent creating and developing the Shelly STEM Challenge series. Check out our pictures on Facebook, and be on the lookout for the next Challenge! Mr. Levy is planning a second Drag Race for early spring.
-Regina Carson

2017 Govie Gala

Though the Conga Line has been around for over a century it never fails to get everyone on the dance floor, and when the DJ yelled, “Everybody, let’s Conga!” at the Govie Gala last month, I was almost trampled mid-photo. Again. For the 4th year in a row. Somehow I never see it coming.

Luckily, before I could say Aloha they had moved on to the Limbo, and between that and the Cupid Shuffle I was able to snap close to 85 photos. Be sure to check them out on Facebook!

This year’s dance theme was Luau, and Mrs. Sebolt and the Dance Committee put on a spectacular event. They created a Paradise-themed photo booth in the lobby, complete with hula skirts, leis, sunglasses, and coconut bikini tops. They filled the snack table with exotic desserts (Munchkins) and Hawaiian Punch, and they transformed the lecture hall

into an island wonderland of lights, streamers, stuffed parrots, and – new this year – blow-ups! The blow-ups were a huge hit and consisted of a giant orca, a floatation ring, and a cheeseburger...in Paradise...and although no one put an eye out keeping those things



airborne, they did knock loose a ceiling tile before Shamu was mercifully deflated.

Admission to the dance was five cans of food for Feeding America Southwest Virginia, and the students donated a total of 660 pounds of food to help the hungry. They voted for a **queen and king of the dance** and crowned **Sarah Carista** (senior, Patrick Henry High School) and **Luke Erikson** (senior, Franklin County High School) this year’s royalty. The Committee worked with veteran DJ Kenny Malloch – now in his 17th year with the Govie Gala – to create a tropical mix of music that kept 100 kids tearing up the dance floor for three solid hours. The entire evening was a resounding success.

Every year the Govie Gala is a joyful, inclusive, well-deserved night out that celebrates friendships both old and new. It gives students an opportunity for fellowship outside the classroom and is a chance for our hard-working Lab Rats to become carefree kids for just a few hours. **Special thanks to Mr. Levy, Mrs. Sebolt, and the following students** for making it happen:

McKinley Anders, Sarah Carista, Wells Carson, Logan Dunkenberg, Maddy Duval, Kathryn Fink, Gracie Fisher, Sydney Fisher, Christine Flora, Tiana Horace, Abbey Ingram, Gretchen Kepley, Kendall Livesay, Giselle Pfaeffle, and Ryan Smith.

Special thanks to Mr. Wages, too, for teaching his students the moves to Cotton Eye Joe! They stole the show.

Additional pictures from the Gala can be found on page 3 of the new-letter.
-Regina Carson

Teacher Spotlight on Mrs. Nancy Aldridge

As far as fun facts go, Ms. Aldridge may have raised our bar to its quirkiest level yet. Did you know that she was on the ski team in high school? Or that she was the editor of her college’s humor magazine? Or that she personally knows an NFL running back? Or that her three children all work for the same company in different parts of the world? Or that she and former RVGS chem. teacher Dr. Frazier were in the same career switcher program?

Ms. Aldridge grew up in Williamstown, Massachusetts, a place so lovely the locals call it “A Village Beautiful.” She went to Colgate University, where she snow skied and played softball, was active in student government, and majored in physical science (physics, astronomy, and chemistry). “I tried out a lot of fields at Colgate,” she said. “Studio art, architecture, cosmology...they’re all fascinating. But in the end, I found that old quote to be true: ‘Physics answers all of your questions by questioning all of your answers.’ To me, physics was the most fascinating field of all.”

After college Ms. Aldridge worked for a real estate developer, where she created a program to help manage properties. Once she married and had children, she wanted part-time, flexible work and decided to combine her creative abilities with her analytical skills to become an interior designer. “That’s how I know some Washington Redskins players,” she laughed. “I designed their homes for them.”

Six years ago a friend asked Ms. Aldridge to tutor her child in physics, and something clicked. “I loved every minute of it,” she said, “and I felt like I was making a real difference with that kid. I just suddenly felt compelled to make a deeper impact and to give back.” The Aldridges were living in Richmond then, so she joined the Virginia Department of Education’s career switcher program and became a teacher. Her first year of teaching was at the middle school level, though, and the entire first week she had to fight “an almost overwhelming urge to run out the front doors and never look back,” but then a high school physics teacher retired and Ms. Aldridge made sure she got the job.

During her three years at Goochland High, her redesign of the physics program helped record numbers of students pass the AP exam. Like Dr. Holt, Ms. Aldridge uses the Modeling Physics method, an approach that focuses on conceptual learning and the interconnection between core topics. “We get to play with toys,” she said, smiling, “and the kids really respond to it. This approach uses demos and labs to focus on physically learning how to problem-solve in a collaborative environment, and the skills the students learn are transferable. It’s so gratifying to see them ‘get it,’ and here at the Governor’s School, where every one of my 66 students wants to learn and is willing to step out of their comfort zone and stretch themselves, it’s so exciting. This really

is the best job ever.”

When Ms. Aldridge’s husband retired from federal law enforcement last year, they moved to Smith Mountain Lake, and they love exploring the outdoors together, life on the lake, and travel, especially to visit the grandchildren. When I asked her if it’s weird for her husband to be home while she’s working full time, she responded, “Are you kidding?! Leaving him to do all the work while I get to go to my dream job every day? It’s Heaven! I love Mondays.”

Welcome, Ms. Nancy Aldridge! We’re so happy to have you at Gov. School, every day of the week! TGIM.

-Regina Carson



Alumni Spotlight on Benjamin Ries

Benjamin Ries, RVGS/PHHS Class of 2009, was a Chancellor's Scholar at Vanderbilt and graduated cum laude four years ago. He is now a very busy 3L, but was kind enough to take the time to answer a few questions for us via email.

Where have you been?

I graduated in 2013 from **Vanderbilt University** with a double major in Political Science and Film Studies and Honors in the College of Arts & Science. For the next two years, I worked as a caseworker at the **law firm of Rogers & Hardin LLP in Atlanta, Georgia.**

What did you do there?

At Vanderbilt, I was all over campus **covering events for the school newspaper.** I immersed myself in academics, focusing on **international relations** for my **political science major** and **producing a short documentary** about the student radio station for my **film major.** I spent three "alternative spring breaks" doing **volunteer work** in Atlanta, Nashville, and St. Louis. In Atlanta at Rogers & Hardin, I **assisted attorneys** in a variety of fields of litigation, primarily **white**

collar crime criminal defense and employment law.

Where are you now?

I live in **Atlanta** and am in my third and final year at **Emory Law School.**

What are you doing there?

At Emory Law School, I write for the **Emory Bankruptcy Developments Journal**, the only student run bankruptcy journal in the United States. This year, I am serving as a **Notes and Comments Editor**, meaning that I help second-year students prepare and write the comments they submit for next year's edition of the journal. During summers and regular academic semesters, I've had **internships** with the **Public Defender's Office** for the Atlanta Judicial Circuit, the **Georgia Office of State Administrative Hearings**, Magistrate Judge Robert S. Ballou at the **U.S. District Court** for the Western District of Virginia, and Judge Mary Grace Diehl at the **U.S. Bankruptcy Court** for the Northern District of Georgia.

Where are you going?

Once I graduate from law school, I will

study to pass the Virginia bar exam. Then I will be heading back to Roanoke to serve one year as a **law clerk for the judges of the 23rd Judicial Circuit of Virginia** and one year as a **term clerk for Magistrate Judge Robert S. Ballou** at the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Virginia. Then **I plan to pursue a career in civil litigation.**

How is what you learned at RVGS helping you get there?

The strict requirements for the content and formatting of lab reports back when I attended **RVGS instilled in me a drive for perfection in the work that I produce.** When I draft a memo to be read by a judge, I pay close attention to detail to ensure that what I am submitting reads smoothly and is devoid of grammatical or legal errors. **RVGS also had a major role in teaching me how to best manage my time and study efficiently,** which helps me prepare for law school exams throughout the semester instead of cramming at the last minute.

-Regina Carson

