

THIS MONTH:

- MAR 3 CENTRAL VA REGIONAL SCIENCE FAIR
- MAR 6 LAST ELECTIVE DAY
- MAR 7 INTERIM REPORT
- MAR 13 ELECTIVE SHOPPING DAY
- MAR 15-16 VAJSHS
- MAR 17 WESTERN VIRGINIA REGIONAL FAIR

Counselor's Corner

Congratulations on surviving another intense and exciting Intersession and Project Forum. 2nd semester is off to a great start as the first interim is quickly approaching. Students have already completed registration for their RVGS math and science courses and we are looking ahead to elective shopping day on March 13th. The elective registration form will be due to me on Friday, March 16th.

One important date this spring that you should go ahead and mark on the calendar is our Senior Dinner which has been scheduled for May 7th at Hotel Roanoke. Invitations to the senior dinner will be mailed home mid-April.

Spring may still be a couple of weeks away, but we are all already looking ahead to the many activities that spring brings. Students are preparing for AP tests, SOL tests and/or SAT tests while still maintaining their good grades. Many of them will be adding in spring sports if they haven't already. Time management is always important, but it becomes increasingly so in the spring. If any student feels he/she needs a refresher on how to balance the time, please feel free to see me.

As always, if you have any questions or need any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Project Forum 2018: A Resounding Success



On Saturday, February 3rd, 262 gifted and talented students from 13 high schools in seven school districts across the Roanoke Valley came together to celebrate science at the Governor's School's annual Student Project Forum. Place award winners received ribbons, certificates, and cash prizes for their achievements, and many more students were honored with special awards such as "Outstanding Persistence," "A Product We Would Buy" and "Most Likely to Work at MIT."

Project Forum is always exciting and extraordinary, and this year's event was no exception. A pair of sophomores won first place for their robotics project, and then spent their \$50 cash prize on a business license to incorporate their kombucha project from last year. One senior continued her family's "Curse of the Second," meaning that she won second place at each of her Project Forums, as did her brother before her. Every winner in one category was from the same home school, while seven different schools were represented in the place awards for another. Three was a magic number – more ties occurred for third-place than any other, three categories had three sections each, and just three projects were carried out by three partners.

Students studied everything from otters to nanocrystals to biofuels. Their research was not for the fainthearted – one student worked with blood, another with colon biopsies, and still another with staphylococcus. The greatest number of students (44) chose to work in the Engineering Mechanics field, and more projects (26) were entered in Plant Sciences than any other category. Project titles ranged from three words

to 18, and the longest title word – transesterification – was made up of 19 letters.

Eighteen students and one (anonymous) faculty member showcased their talents at the Art Show, and every Lab Rat who spent Intersession on campus made the slideshow. Scores of Silent Auction-goers got incredible deals on movie passes, golf packages, dining certificates, and Virginia Tech tickets, and one lucky parent placed the winning bid on enough coffee to keep her caffeinated for the rest of the year. Our Annual Appeal made an absolute fortune, and our awards ceremony was standing room only.

Very special thanks for our very special day to:

- * Over 200 parents, local businesses, and community supporters who generously donated cash to the Annual Appeal and gift cards and to the Silent Auction
- * Over 60 judges who encouraged our young scientists and evaluated 154 science projects at the event
- * Dozens of volunteers who prepared and served a delicious lunch to the judges, worked a shift at the Silent Auction, and ensured the auction's success by soliciting gift cards from the community
- * Governor's School faculty for their commitment to their students and dedication to excellence in scientific research
- * Silent Auction chair Paul Parnell and committee members Lisa Nielsen and Susie Holt for their efforts in organizing the Silent Auction and Annual Appeal that raised more than \$27,000 – a new record! – to support innovative student research at RVGS

The full list of award winners, donors, sponsors, and the schedule for various science fairs that RVGS students may attend are posted on the school website, and several hundred pictures from Intersession and Forum are posted to the RVGS Facebook page. Be sure to check them out!

-Regina Carson

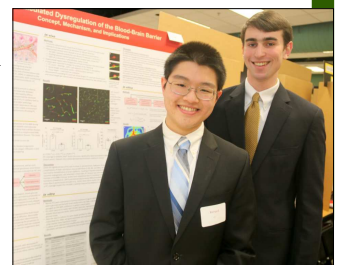
Message from the Director

We had quite an exciting and productive Intersession this year! Four weeks can never fly by as fast as January at RVGS. The students made excellent use of their research time, however, and generated some truly remarkable projects. I'm very proud of their work, and I look forward to seeing their success in regional competition later this month.

I would like to express the school's sincere appreciation to all our families and community members for your generous contributions during this year's Annual Appeal and Silent Auction. This was our most successful fundraising year to date! We will put those contributions to good use in support of our students.

Even with Project Forum behind us, we have more enriching events and initiatives planned for second semester, such as an upcoming STEM careers panel and an increased focus on supporting student goal-setting.

As always, please don't hesitate to reach out to me or our teachers with any questions, concerns, or comments.



Alumni Spotlight on Jennifer Brody

Jennifer Brody, RVGS/PHHS Class of 1997, is a very prolific, very successful science fiction author. During a rare break from her latest book tour, film set, and/or teaching gig, she was kind enough to answer a few questions for us via email.

1) Where have you been?

After graduating first in my class from Patrick Henry HS in 1997, I attended Harvard University. From there, I moved to Los Angeles to work in Hollywood, where I've stayed ever since.

2) What did you do there?

At Harvard, **I got my degree in Visual and Environmental Studies (VES)** with a focus in film and photography. I mostly hung out with the weird art kids and made experimental short films. I graduated with my BA (magna cum laude) in 2001.

3) Where are you now?

Los Angeles (the Best Coast!). I live in Laurel Canyon in the **Hollywood Hills** with my husband and one-eyed miniature Goldendoodle named Commander Ryker (after Star Trek).

4) What are you doing there?

I began my career in Hollywood. Highlights include **working for Michael Bay's Platinum Dunes and New Line Cinema,**

most notably on *The Lord of the Rings* films, *The Golden Compass*, and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. **I also produced the feature film *Make It Happen*** starring Mary Elizabeth Winstead and Tessa Thompson. **Now I write full time.** My debut novel *The 13th Continuum* sold in a 3-book deal and is being packaged into a feature film. The book is a Gold Medal Winner (Young Adult – Sci-Fi/Fantasy) from the *Independent Publisher's* Moonbeam Children's Book Awards. *Return of the Continuums* and *The United Continuums* complete this epic trilogy. Translation rights to my books have sold in multiple territories, most notably Russia and China. My short fiction appears in the *From the Stars* anthology and Common Deer Press' Short Tails. **I'm also a creative writing instructor** at the Writing Pad, a **volunteer mentor** for the Young Storytellers Foundation, and **board member for non-profit writing competitions** the Roswell Award and the Tomorrow Prize.

5) Where are you going?

Currently, **I'm hard at work on my new book.** It's another young adult sci-fi book, but this one is more romance/space opera. **I've been awarded a winter residency at the Banff Centre for the Arts**, so I'm headed up there and hoping to finish the first draft of my new book. I've also got a **lot of book events this spring.** I had the great pleasure of ap-

pearing at the VA Festival of the Book last year and speaking at Hollins University, when I did a VA book tour. My books are popular in Russia right now. The third book—*The United Continuums*—publishes there this spring. The books are also coming out in China next, and the film pitch will be going out to major studios. Additionally, **my short stories 200** (Common Deer Press) and *Let Me In* (*From the Stars* anthology) **are both being adapted for film.**

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

I think **my background in STEM gave me the confidence to write harder science fiction books.** My debut novel features a female protagonist named Myra who is an engineer and tasked with saving her underwater colony. I like to say that her superpower is science! I attended the Launchpad Astronomy Workshop for writers this year. It's like **astronomy boot camp.** My background from **RVGS helped me keep up in the classes. I like incorporating real science into my books.**

-Regina Carson



Alumni in Action

In addition to Jennifer Brody (featured above), we have many RVGS graduates contributing to the school and making news!

Thank you to Lydia Higgs (class of 2006) for presenting as a guest speaker in Ms. Bohland's Biology classes. Lydia is a Licensed Certified Genetic Counselor for Carilion Clinic Oncology.

Thank you to our Project Forum Alumni Judges! We appreciate you, Grace Casola, Thomas Duckwall, Lydia Higgs, Zachary Kemp, McKenna Luzynski, JP Stewart, Sarah Whitt, and Brooke Williams!



Sarah Kennedy (Class of 2009) spoke at our most recent "Women in STEM" breakfast about her experiences as an engineer and manager with Clark Construction.

Dr. Leslie Burdett Hart (class of 1996) was a featured scientist in episode 7, "Oceans Under Threat", of the BBC series "Blue Planet II". The episode shows for the first time in the US on March 3 at 9:00 P.M. on BBC America. Dr. Hart earned a PhD in Epidemiology from the Medical University of South Carolina and her research focuses on the health impacts on marine mammals of exposure to man-made chemicals.

'Therapets' Visits RVGS

On January 29th, TheraPets of the Roanoke Valley brought their therapy dogs to RVGS for a Stress Busters event designed to help our Lab Rats cope with the anxiety of zebra fish that aren't mating, mustard plants that aren't growing, and robotic arms that aren't moving. Intercession can be a stressful time for our students, and Gov. School gets that. Thank you to TheraPets for helping us all chillax and get back on track! Best Intercession Interruption ever!



Behind the Scenes During Intercession

