

## Pathways to Health Professions

STEAM Academy  
program launches  
careers in health care



As you step into Mrs. Carrie Detwiler's classroom at the STEAM Academy, you're immediately drawn into a distinctive learning environment. This isn't just any classroom. The lab mirrors three different care settings—a skilled nursing facility, a hospital, and a doctor's office. Here, students in the Pathways to Health Professions program immerse themselves in hands-on learning, developing the foundational skills necessary for a range of health care professions.

Students also work in the STEAM Academy Immersive Health Lab, which features Anatomage Tables, the most technologically advanced 3D anatomy visualization and virtual dissection tool for anatomy and physiology education, a VH Dissector virtual reality platform, and an interactive Auscultation Task Trainer.

The students love working with the Anatomage Tables, but Mrs. Detwiler's favorite classroom activity is the patient scenario exercise. She presents a scenario, and the students must follow the proper steps to care for the patient. It develops critical thinking skills and reinforces their learning in the classroom and lab.

*"I'm proud of how much they've retained from our early lessons. When we revisit concepts from the beginning of the year, their depth of understanding and ability to grasp higher-level knowledge is remarkable."*

- Mrs. Carrie Detwiler,  
Pathways to Health Professions Instructor

Experience outside the classroom is a program highlight, providing valuable career exploration. Students visited UPMC Altoona and explored departments including medical, surgical, cardiac, ICUs, cytology and histology labs, the STAT medivac and helipad, trauma bays, labor and delivery, and radiology. Each department had a speaker to give exposure to career pathways to students.

In April, they observed an autopsy at the Indiana County Coroner's office, an experience that provided valuable insights into careers in pathophysiology. They also toured the CVS Pharmacy Training Center, where they participated in a pharmacy technician simulation and explored various careers in the field. The last trip of the year will take them to Allegheny General Hospital to observe an open heart surgery—an extraordinary opportunity for students.



Pathways to Health Professions is designed to prepare students for a wide range of careers in the medical field, from pharmacist to lab assistant to medical doctor and everything in between. Our current students are planning careers as physician's assistants, radiologic technicians, phlebotomists, and nurses. This versatility is a key strength of the program, and we're proud to announce that enrollment is set to double for the 2024-2025 school year.

**The River Valley STEAM Academy offers programs in Automation Engineering, Biomedical Technology, Cybersecurity, Electrical Occupations and Powerline, Esports, Pathways to Health Professions, Rising Educators, Sports Medicine and Rehabilitative Therapy, and Welding Technology. For more information, visit [www.rvsteamacademy.org](http://www.rvsteamacademy.org) or call 724-343-3230.**

## BES Elementary Students Craft Chocolate with Cutting-Edge Tech

By Olivia Ganoë, River Valley High School

A group of third-grade students at Blairsville Elementary is launching a delicious new venture. Mrs. Linzi Strong, Computer Science Teacher, leads a group of about a dozen third-grade students who are hard at work starting their own chocolate-making business using a Cocoa Press 3D chocolate printer.

The Cocoa Press heats and builds the chocolate layer by layer. This innovative technology creates textures and shapes that aren't possible with traditional chocolate making. Each printer arrives as a DIY kit and requires extensive time to build!



These enterprising third-grade students found themselves in the Media Center due to their exceptional behavior and leadership demonstrated during their lunch period. Seizing the opportunity, they decided to learn how to use the Cocoa Press and even ventured into selling their creations. They mastered the software and honed their technical skills to design and print chocolate using the Cocoa Press. Their creations span a wide range of shapes, from Benny, the school dog, to the RV logo.

In addition to learning the essentials of starting a business, the students are cultivating skills that enhance their academic performance and personal growth. The initiative allows them to explore the **Enterprising** RIASEC theme, one of six themes in the RIASEC framework designed to help students explore their strengths, interests, and values.

Before the students could sell their creations, they needed to pitch the business idea and get approval from their school leaders. They printed RV logos and Benny-shaped chocolate to share with the School Board to thank them for adding the Cocoa Press 3D printer to the school. They requested meetings and pitched their idea to Mr. Brian Higginbotham, BES Principal, Mrs. Regina Geesey, Assistant Superintendent, and Mr. Michael Leasure, RVHS Principal.

So far, the students have sold chocolates at several events and are currently selling items at the BES Cool Beans Cafe. This month, the students are debuting their chocolate creations at the Middle/High School cafeteria. Saltsburg Elementary's Cocoa Press will be ready for use in the 2024-2025 school year.

## RVHS Students Explore Their Futures at Point Park University



River Valley students who are currently taking Point Park classes visited the campus on April 22 to tour and meet with University leaders. Several students taking classes in business and cybersecurity had the opportunity to hear speakers, watch presentations for new products created by Point Park students, and participate in entrepreneurship activities.

*Continuing for the 2024-2025 school year, any River Valley student will receive a \$6,000 scholarship to attend Point Park University if they are dually enrolled in Point Park classes their senior year.*

**New**

**RIASEC**  
**Video**



RVSD is transforming education with the RIASEC framework and cultivating a culture of career curiosity. Watch the new video to explore how this innovative approach aligns student interests with career exploration.



[Watch Now!](#)



## A Legacy of Learning: Saltsburg Elementary's Historical Field Trips

For the past 30 years, Saltsburg Elementary School fifth graders have embarked on a series of field trips that bring their history lessons to life. This year, the fifth-grade class explored Fort Necessity, Fort Ligonier, Saltsburg's Stone House Museum, and Gettysburg, discovering that many pivotal events in United States history unfolded right in our own backyard.



They began at Fort Necessity, where they hiked to nearby Jumonville Glen and explored the tactical advantages of high ground versus low ground. They saw where the French camped and how George Washington's party was able to surround them. This is one of SES Teacher Ms. Missie Hall's favorite trips for her students. "The Seven Years' War was fought on four continents, all because of a skirmish in Jumonville Glen, and we still don't know who fired first," she said. "The rock formations are still there, and nothing has changed except what nature has done over the years."

They toured Fort Necessity and its museum, learning more about the French and Indian War and Seven Years' War, the story of the 1754 battle, the fur trade and bartering system, the construction of the fort, and the uniforms, weapons, and tools that were used at the time.

They continued their study of the French and Indian War at Fort Ligonier. They toured the Fort and museum and made crafts that would have been popular in the 1700s and 1800s. They learned how the different buildings were used and saw military uniforms from around the world. Mr. David Gertsel, a retired SES teacher and current Fort Ligonier Educator, led a discussion about the development of the weapons used at the time.

As winter thaws into spring, it's the perfect time for an overnight trip to the Lutherlyn Environmental Learning Center. At Lutherlyn, students focused on environmental responsibility, team building, and outdoor skills. They explored the science and history of maple syrup production. The students engaged in the full maple sugaring process—from measuring trees and tapping spiles to collecting sap and boiling it into syrup at the Sugar Shack, where they tasted the sweet result.

This year, the students explored local history at the Saltsburg Stone House Museum, a new addition to the field trips. They learned about the discovery of salt in the area and the development of the industry, including the transportation networks from railroads to the canal. The museum provided a window into daily life from the late 1700s through the 1950s, offering students a glimpse of the past and the people who shaped their community.

The culmination of the field trip series was May 9, when they toured Gettysburg. This day-long trip focuses on the Civil War with interactive experiences like scavenger hunts and cannon demonstrations. They learn about Civil War medicine at the Seminary Ridge Museum, experience the immersive Gettysburg Cyclorama painting, which is longer than a football field, watch a documentary, and finish with a tour of the battlefield to understand how the events unfolded and the significance of the battle.



Students and teachers gather at the base of the Pennsylvania Monument at Gettysburg National Military Park.

Now approaching retirement, Ms. Hall shared her reflections on organizing the field trips. She's hiked through Lutherlyn with a broken foot, celebrated several birthdays while away on field trips, and enjoyed games of capture the flag and snowman-building competitions with her students over the years. These trips are more than just a school tradition; they're a vital part of learning, connecting students with the past in a meaningful way. Here's to many more years of exploring history!



A cannon demonstration at Gettysburg National Military Park.



## Snack Cart Program Sparks Learning and Community at RVMS

A unique educational initiative rolls into action every Tuesday and Thursday, providing more than just a quick snack break for middle school students. Launched in January, the Snack Cart is a middle school version of the high school's Cool Beans Cafe.

Under the guidance of Miss Ford and Ms. Olasz, students from their classes manage the Snack Cart and stock it with favorites from candy to slushies. Middle school teachers can sign up to have the cart come to the hall outside their classrooms during 7th and 8th periods. The response to the snack cart has been overwhelmingly positive. Teachers like Mr. Temple and Mr. Blystone are regular patrons, and students are always excited to hear that their teacher has signed up for the cart.



Miss Ford and Ms. Olasz's students practice organization skills by listing and gathering needed supplies, stocking the cart, and setting up in the scheduled areas. They ensure everything is ready to go when it's time to visit the classrooms. "They like engaging in something different from other classes and enjoy the aspects of running the business. This opportunity gives the students a chance to generalize and practice skills they work on in small group settings," said Miss Ford.

*"It allows the students to gain real-world experiences working with money, communicating, and interacting with others while using listening and comprehension skills."*

- Ms. Amie Olasz,  
RVMS Teacher

The Snack Cart fosters a sense of community and belonging among students. As students from different classes gather to purchase their favorite snacks, they engage in meaningful exchanges—compliments on a cool shirt or shared experiences from track practice—that might not happen in the hurried encounters in the hallway. With each visit, the Snack Cart builds connections and skills that extend far beyond the classroom walls.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**MEMORIAL DAY**  
NO SCHOOL

MAY  
27

**LAST DAY OF SCHOOL & GRADUATION**

MAY  
29

**SUMMER**

**BREAK BEGINS**

MAY  
30

**OPEN HOUSE: RVHS & RVMS**

AUG  
19

**OPEN HOUSE: BES & SES**

AUG  
20

**WELCOME BACK!**

**FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL**

AUG  
21



**2024-2025 SCHOOL CALENDAR**



## Congratulations to this year's Excellence in Education award winners!



Bradley McDivitt, Carley Weimer, Emma Prenni, Emilee Staats, Sara McConnell, Noah Horchar  
Not pictured: Emerson Skirboll, Mrs. Karen Magalich