

11/26-28—Thanksgiving break
12/2—RVGS Determined
12/8—Gingerbread competition!
12/15- AM1/PM1 Exams
12/16- AM2/PM2 Exams/ Govie Gala
12/19- End of Semester

RVGS Newsletter



Issue 1
Fall 2025

Counselor Corner

First semester is quickly coming to an end. It's amazing how quickly the last few months have passed! Exams will be coming up soon as will some fun events. The annual "Gingerbread Building Contest" will take place the week of December 8th and will coincide with our winter spirit week! Teams of 2 to 5 will sign up to create unique gingerbread "houses" before and after school in hopes of winning a certificate, bragging rights and my chocolate chip pancakes! The only cost to enter is \$5 per student. Govie Gala, our annual dance, will take place on Tuesday, December 16th from 7:00 – 10:00pm. There will be a DJ, photo area and lots of fun. The theme this year will be "Vegas Heist". Encourage your students to dress up and celebrate the end of exams with us. The only cost is \$5 or 5 canned food items. All proceeds for the Gingerbread contest and Govie Gala go to Feeding America.

After exams students will be entering into Intercession. I want to remind students and parents the importance of time management. This is important not only for the research project itself, but for the math and science assignments that the students will be working on throughout the month of January. It's very easy to put things off when you aren't in class each day. Inevitably, that procrastination will lead to increased stress and poor quality of work....or no work at all. Please remember to stay on top of your assignments and avoid the last-minute stress.

It is also very important to remember the importance of a healthy and consistent sleep schedule. Many of our over-extended students tend to sacrifice sleep far too frequently. This leads to an increase in depression and anxiety as well as a decline in overall mental and physical health. Academics are important, but your physical and mental health MUST be a priority.

Stay safe and healthy this winter and enjoy a much-deserved rest over winter break

-Kathy Sebolt

James River Trip

The AP Environmental Science students recently spent the day on the James River for a hands-on field experience in partnership with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. Instead of learning about watersheds, ecosystems, and water quality from a textbook, students had the opportunity to directly interact with one of Virginia's most important river systems.

While on the river, students conducted real-world scientific testing and data collection. They performed water quality measurements, including dissolved oxygen, pH, temperature, and turbidity. In addition, students collected and examined macroinvertebrates—small insects and organisms that live among rocks and sediment. Because different species tolerate different water conditions, the presence or absence of certain macroinvertebrates can reveal a lot about the health of the river. Students identified the organisms they collected, learned what they indicate about pollution levels, and used the data to draw conclusions about overall stream quality.

Beyond the academic experience, the trip offered students a chance to appreciate the natural



beauty of the James River and reflect on the importance of conservation. Many students commented that this type of field study helped them better understand how interconnected environmental systems are and how classroom concepts come alive in real ecosystems.

It was a meaningful day of science, learning, and adventure—one that students are likely to remember long after their final test.

Message from the Director

RVGS has had great start to the 2025-26 school year! As you may know, we have welcomed two new staff members to RVGS this year, Mrs. Carr in Chemistry and Mr. Clarkston in Physics, and it has been a pleasure to have them incorporate themselves into the RVGS community so quickly. I know I speak for many students and staff when I say it has been difficult to start this school year without Mr. Smith, but I know he is strong in our memories and will continue to be throughout the year.

We prioritize the need to help support students, whether in relation to grades or mental wellness. Anyone from a new student to a senior can feel strain at times academically or emotionally. I encourage students to seek out academic assistance from teachers proactively, rather than as a last resort. Additionally, for first year students we have twice weekly open tutoring sessions with Mr. Hoffman after school I encourage the students to take advantage of. Likewise, I encourage students to seek support from Mrs. Sebolt or another trusted adult if they are experiencing excessive stress or emotional struggles. We want to be available and provide support in these areas, so please reach out when the need arises.

RVGS recently had an evaluation visit from the VDOE that went very well. They visited classes, interviewed stakeholders, and talked to staff to explore what was going well and where we can continue to improve. The results were very positive about our school and community, but we also received some helpful recommendations to consider. Thanks to those who completed surveys and gave feedback.

As always, don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions, comments, or concerns.

RVGS New Teacher-Melissa Carr



Tell us a little about your background

I am a Roanoke-native growing up in the Grandin-Wasena area right around RVGS. I attended Roanoke City Schools, including Patrick Henry High School, and was a member of the PHHS Marching Band. I attended Roanoke College, where I was a Chemistry major with a passion for music. I sang in the Roanoke College Choir, the Mainstreet Acapella group and played in the Roanoke College Concert Band. Later, I sang in the Roanoke Symphony Choir for 11 years. I was formerly employed with Roanoke County Schools for 19 years where I taught Chemistry, Honors Chemistry and AP Chemistry at William Byrd High School. I still live in the RVGS surrounding area, enjoy my gym, obstacle course racing, all-things -Roanoke, and being active in general. I have a mother, sister and aunt in the area and a sweet orange cat at home.

What inspired you to join RVGS? What do you enjoy most about working here?

I have always been intrigued by RVGS and the research going on within its walls. While working with the National Math and Science Initiative, I met Steve Smith and we became friends and colleagues that would continue to run into each other at various events and at the Roanoke County Science Fair. We also worked together at Virginia Tech during one summer where we were picked with a few other RVGS teachers to conduct research with graduate students for two months and present our research and findings at the culminating poster presentation. He always talked about how amazing his job was at RVGS, and that he'd hoped I would one day get the chance to experience it myself.

Over the past years, I helped build the AP Chemistry and Science Fair program at WBHS. In the last 5 years, a colleague and I were able to make large leaps and bounds with the research program. I dreamed of someday having the opportunity to teach at RVGS, and feel fortunate in my current position here. I like feeling like I am making a difference in students lives, and I love making Chemistry fun and interesting to students – because I really love teaching Chemistry. I also love how close RVGS is to my home!

RVGS is fast-paced, but that is also exciting to me. I am trying to find my rhythm here, but I am still very glad I applied and accepted the position here. I cannot say I have any dislikes.

Favorite thing about teaching at RVGS

I love the 'lightbulb' moment when a student understands something simple and how it fits into a more complex system. Everyone here is so nice and supportive. The students are lively, thankful and happy to be here. There is a great value on student learning and growth at RVGS and we have the resources to show students more than they can get other places. I couldn't be happier.

RVGS New Teacher-Michael Clarkston



Can you share a little about your background?

I grew up mostly in California and Germany while my dad served in the military, which meant lots of moving and many different school experiences. I attended Solano Community College, Sacramento City College, and UC Davis before starting my teaching career. I

taught in California public high schools for 20 years before my family made the move to Virginia. I've been married for 16 years (17 this Saturday!) and have two sons—Liam (12) and Royce (10), who keep life fun and busy.

What brought you and your family to Roanoke?

Roanoke is centrally located to our extended family, which was a big part of our decision, but we also completely fell in love with the area itself. The outdoor opportunities here—hiking, nature trails, the mountains, and all the fresh air—have been such a great fit for our family's lifestyle. It has felt like home very quickly.

What are your favorite aspects of teaching?

One of my favorite parts of teaching is seeing students reach those hard-earned "ah-ha!" moments. Watching a concept finally click after someone has pushed through challenges is incredibly rewarding. I love seeing that spark of excitement when they realize what they're capable of.

I also enjoy creating lessons and hands-on activities that allow students to explore, build, and truly experience learning. Designing opportunities where students get to collaborate, experiment, and discover solutions for themselves is something I'm passionate about. Seeing students grow confident, curious, and proud of their work is what makes teaching so meaningful for me.

Senior Sunrise

One of the most anticipated traditions for Seniors at RVGS is the annual **Senior Sunrise**. This year, on October 17th, the Class of 2025 gathered before dawn, bundled in blankets and sweatshirts, to watch the sunrise together and celebrate

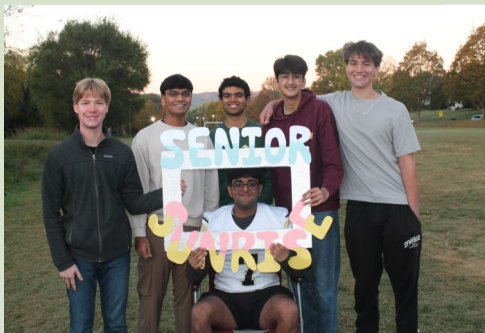


the beginning of their final year at RVGS. Students spread out across the field with chairs, picnic blankets, and lots of breakfast treats to share. Mrs. Sebolt generously provided plenty of donuts and juice, adding to the warm sense of community despite the chilly morning air.



As the sky shifted from grey to orange and pink, seniors laughed, took photos, and reflected on how

quickly their time at RVGS has passed. It was a peaceful and meaningful moment, symbolizing a fresh start and the exciting year ahead. In the spring, the Senior class will reunite once more for **Senior Sunset**, a companion event that marks the end of their RVGS journey and celebrates all they have accomplished together.



ULTIMATE FRISBEE



The fall season of RVGS's annual Ultimate Frisbee tournament wrapped up this week with an exciting championship match that brought students together in friendly competition and school spirit. After weeks of play, the team "Pipsqueaks" claimed the title of Fall 2025 Ultimate Frisbee Champions. When the final point was scored, the Pipsqueaks celebrated their hard-earned victory and were rewarded with a pancake breakfast, to recognize their dedication and team effort.

In addition to the fun and competition, the tournament served a greater purpose. Each team paid an entry fee to participate, and all proceeds were donated to the United Way, helping support community programs and local families in need. The event highlighted not only athletic skill but also the RVGS commitment to service and giving back.



The Ultimate Frisbee tournament continues to be a favorite fall tradition. Students are already looking forward to the spring season and another chance to compete for the championship title.



Summer STEM Activities

RVGS students had a busy summer! They spent their time away from RVGS attending summer camps and classes, interning, and volunteering.

Claire McCahill– Summer Residential Governor’s School for Medicine and Health

Stella Gillenwater-Carilion Clinic youth volunteer program-

Jamal Hern– intern at M3:GRAFIX.

Gabby Romeo-internship at FBRI

Joshua Manning-VCOM SEE program

Jack Janiga-Notre Dame Summer Scholars, intern FBRI

Ayush Pinnamaraji-Intern at FBRI

Jeanne Picard-Summer Residential Governor’s School for M,S &T

Charlotte Anstay– shadowing in embryology lab

Miya Morton-scribing at Bradley Free Clinic

Dorothy Myers-intern FBRI lab

Sam Glenn-intern 3D print lab at FBRI

Audrey Kelley-intern at Carilion Sleep and Pulmonary Medicine Clinic

Prisha Tiwari– shadowed an ophthalmologist office and volunteered at Carilion

Elijah Harl– STEM class artificial intelligence

Vivienne Eaton-Summer Residential Governor’s School

Tara Farrokhpoor-volunteered at nursing home and math tutor

Reni O’Brien-EXPLO-vet focus program

Nicholas Young-Robotic competitions

Colin Ray– Robotic summer camp at BCAT, FTC robotics team

Students were also busy with: engineering camps, tutoring, VA 4-H camp, summer sport camps, volunteering at area hospitals and summer employment



SOCIAL MEDIA

Want to stay up to date on all the exciting happenings at RVGS? Be sure to following us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.



Roanoke Valley Governor's School for Science and Technology | Facebook (@rvgslabrats)

RVGS LabRats (@rvgslabrats) • Instagram photos and videos

RVGS Clubs and Activities

There is a wide **variety** of **clubs** and activities available for students to join at RVGS. Clubs and activities are a great way to find where you belong in your high school social community and to find your niche among students with similar interests and goals. Be sure to check out:

Mindful Wednesdays

Unified Partners

* Rat Chat*

Student Advisory Committee

* FCA*

See Mrs. Sebolt to get the details about any of the clubs you may be interested in joining!

