UPCOMING DATES:
Nov 25-27: No School
Dec 15: AM1/PM1 Exams
Dec 16: AM2/PM2 Exams
Evening Dec 16: Govie Gala
Dec 18: Last day of semester
Jan 5: First day back

RVGS Newsletter

Issue 1
Fall 2026

Counselor Corner

Second 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 7th 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 Wednesday, December 16th from 7:00 – 10:00pm. There will be a DJ, photo area and lots of fun. The theme this year will be voted on by the seniors and announced soon. The only cost to attend 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 Intersession. 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

Welcome Back

The 2026 Shelly Challenge honored Dr. Shelly, the first director of the Roanoke Valley Governor's School, put engineering skills to the test. This year's challenge invited students to design and build a race car powered by a non-combustible energy source. Students worked on their projects before school, putting their creativity, teamwork, and engineering skills to the test while having a great time along the way.
Cars had to fit within a 25 cm x 15 cm x 12 cm box and weigh no more than 1 kg. Teams raced to cover 30 feet in the shortest time while ensuring their cars came to a complete stop within 8 feet past the finish line.



Along the way, students overcame a variety of engineering challenges, including troubleshooting software, and fine-tuning their designs to improve speed and stopping distance. Their persistence and problem-solving skills were key to bringing their race cars to the finish line. Congratulations to first-place winners Devanshi and Charlotte, second-place winners Nathan, Trey, Alex, and Arrington, and third-place winners Brad, Nich, Amelia, and Willow.
It was a great challenge filled with innovation, teamwork, problem-solving, and fun. We are already looking forward to next year's Shelly Challenge!

Message from Director

I hope you and your family are enjoying a fun fall season so far. The first semester of the school year has gone well, and I'm proud of how our students and teachers have been working through the various challenges that pop up. I encourage students to keep in mind that we are getting into the latter part of the semester and with fewer remaining assessments remaining, each opportunity to show growth is critical. On the flip side, it's important to stay consistent and continue working hard to finish strong. All core classes have cumulative semester exams, and I would encourage students to set aside from study time to review prior concepts as we get closer to those exams in December.

Along those lines, I would encourage students to be thoughtful and responsive with their study strategies and time-management. If students are feeling more stressed than they are comfortable with or assessment performance isn't where they would like, these areas are a good place to start. Students can always request time with Mrs. Sebolt or myself to discuss tips, strategies, and ideas for how they can level up their study time and practice. Students shouldn't forget that their teachers can be a resource before or after school.

On the exciting end of things, we have the Govie Gala coming up after exams the evening of 12/16. The Govie Gala is our school dance and is a lot of fun for the students. More information about the theme and other details will come when we get closer to the event, but be sure to put that on your calendar because it is definitely the social event of the season!

If you have any questions, concerns, or needs, please don't hesitate to reach out to me by phone or email.

Welcome to RVGS-Ashley Pratt



When did you first know you loved math?

I always enjoyed math throughout school, but I actually preferred learning science. I loved the inquiry involved and the kinds of things we got to do in science class—asking questions, making observations, generating hypotheses, and testing out our ideas—and found math just to be something I enjoyed doing. However, in fifth grade, I participated in Math Olympiad and got to see questions where I really had to think, and I realized that math could actually be pretty great too. I continued doing various math competitions throughout middle school, high school, and college, and eventually decided that I wanted to major in math after two years of studying engineering at Georgia Tech.

Where did you go to college?

With the aspiration of being an engineer where I could combine my love of math and science, I completed two years at Georgia Tech. It was challenging and rewarding, and I had a great time there. However, I had been tutoring students throughout high school and those first two years of college, and I taught in an afterschool program at an elementary school. As I took more engineering courses, I felt a strong urge to go into education. I met with an advisor who strongly encouraged me to transfer to a college with an education program, so I joined my parents back in Virginia and finished up at Longwood University (where I actually took a few classes with Mr. Taylor!)

I had an amazing experience in a summer statistics research program through Miami University (in Ohio) and took a quick detour into a PhD program in Statistics at North Carolina State. While that taught me a lot (both about statistics and myself!), but I kept feeling that same calling towards teaching math (I can definitely understand Moana's "How Far I'll Go" call to the ocean!) I completed two semesters of the program and changed to the teaching program and NC State. I have been teaching ever since!

Recently, I became very interested in educational technology. Through distance learning, I completed an Education Specialist degree from Boise State in 2024.

Where else have you taught?

I started my teaching journey at Patrick Henry High School with Algebra 2 and Geometry. For 5 years at James River, I mostly taught dual enrollment courses. I then joined the faculty at Mountain Gateway Community College where I served as the Program Head for Math and Education for several years before spending a year in RCPS as a Math Coach and ultimately ending up here at RVGS!

What is your favorite thing about teaching at RVGS?

The students here are incredible! They ask deep, thoughtful questions and constantly challenge me to really dig into the content and expose them to the "why" of mathematics. I also am enjoying the crossover between my classes and science and technology, and I'm having a lot of fun learning about bioplastics in the Fundamentals of Research class!

Do you have pets?

I have always lived with at least 1 cat, usually 2, and for a few years 4. I love the company of cats and how curious and playful they can be! But back in 2021, I decided to adopt birds and now have a cockatiel, and a conure. I find these birds to be so smart, inquisitive, and playful! We've taught them a few tricks and words—they say good morning every morning and make a kissing sound every night before bed!

What do you do outside of teaching?

I love to paint (watercolor has been my favorite lately), make crafts, cook, and read. I also am a keyboard player in my church's worship band and occasionally sing harmony with the vocalists there.

Important Upcoming Dates



Thanksgiving break (no school)- 11/25-11/27
Gingerbread Contest-12/7-12/11
Govie Gala-12/16
Winter Break (no school) 12/21-1/5/2027
MLK Day (no school)-1/18/2027
Project Forum-1/30/2027

Senior Sunrise



On the chilly morning of October 22, seniors at Roanoke Valley Governor's School (RVGS) gathered before dawn for the annual Senior Sunrise, a special tradition that gives students an opportunity to slow down, reflect, and celebrate the beginning of their final year together.

As the sun rose over the horizon, students enjoyed donuts, conversation, and the warmth of friendship despite the cool temperatures. The event provided a welcome break from busy schedules and academic demands, allowing seniors to spend quality time with classmates and create memories during a year filled with milestones.

More than just an early morning gathering, Senior Sunrise serves as a reminder of how far students have come and the experiences they have shared throughout their high school journey. It offers a chance to acknowledge the significance of senior year while looking ahead to the exciting opportunities and challenges that await after graduation.

The relaxed atmosphere encouraged students to connect with friends, take photos, and appreciate the moment together. Laughter and conversation filled the morning air as classmates reflected on their years at RVGS and anticipated the months ahead.



While Senior Sunrise marks the beginning of the final chapter of high school, students are already looking forward to another beloved tradition: Senior Sunset. Scheduled for later in the year, the event will provide an opportunity to gather once again, this time to celebrate the memories, achievements, and friendships that defined the Class of 2027's time at RVGS.

Between the sunrise that welcomed their senior year and the sunset that will help bring it to a close, RVGS seniors are making the most of every moment together.

Ultimate Frisbee



Students spent a week kicking off their mornings with the Fall Edition of the Ultimate Frisbee Tournament! Nine teams competed in the early morning hours before classes, braving chilly temperatures and bringing plenty of energy and enthusiasm to the competition. Each player contributed $5 to participate, with all proceeds going to support the United Way.

The championship game took place following Senior Sunrise and featured two senior teams battling for the title. In the end, the Pipsqueaks successfully defended their championship title and claimed another victory!

After a week of spirited competition, students warmed up and enjoyed delicious pancakes prepared by Mrs. Sebolt.

The tournament was a great way to build school spirit, enjoy friendly competition, and give back to the community. Thanks to everyone who participated and helped make the event a success. We can't wait for the Spring Edition!

Staff Highlight-Melissa Carr

Spartan Racing Success and the Road Ahead

Q: How did you get started with Spartan racing?
A: I started running Spartan races in 2017 when my gym launched a Spartan SGX training program. What began as a new fitness challenge quickly became a passion. Since then, I've completed about 46 Spartan races, primarily on the East Coast. One of my most memorable experiences was traveling to Hawaii in 2021 to complete the Spartan Trifecta.

Q: What does your training typically look like?
A: My training focuses mainly on running and preparing for upper-body obstacles. Spartan races require a broad range of skills because participants encounter obstacles such as monkey bars, rotating monkey bars, rope climbs, rope traverses, climbing walls, swimming sections, heavy carries involving buckets, sandbags, concrete blocks, and metal chains, as well as barbed wire crawls and many other challenges.

Q: What makes Spartan races unique compared to other endurance events?
A: Spartan races challenge you physically, mentally, and emotionally. While strength and endurance are important, the longer races really test your resilience. The Spartan Beast covers approximately 13 to 17 miles, while Spartan Ultras range from 30 to 34 miles. Those longer distances can push you to your limits and require a tremendous amount of determination.

Q: What are some of your proudest accomplishments in the sport?
A: Last year, I competed in the Spartan World Championships, which were held in the United States for the first time. I finished 8th in my age group in the world, which was a significant achievement. Throughout my racing career, I've also earned several age-group victories. While Spartan racing can be enjoyed at any level, competing for podium finishes gives me extra motivation and a goal to strive toward.

Q: Why was your recent success in West Virginia especially meaningful?
A: I had never reached the podium in West Virginia before, and no one from our gym had either, so accomplishing that was a big milestone. Honestly, I was just as thankful to finish the 16.4-mile course and 30 obstacles with very few bruises and no injuries. Achieving a podium finish made the experience even more memorable.



Q: What's next for you?
A: I'll be competing in the Virginia (Massanutten) Super in October and the South Carolina Beast in November. My goal is to continue improving, stay healthy, and hopefully bring home a few more medals while having fun along the way.



Q: After all these races, what keeps you coming back?
A: Spartan racing provides the perfect combination of fitness, competition, personal growth, and camaraderie. Every race presents a new challenge, and there's always another goal to pursue. Whether it's chasing a podium finish or simply enjoying the experience with friends, it's an incredibly rewarding sport that keeps me motivated year after year.

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

RVGS LabRats (@rvgslabrats) • Instagram photos and vide-

Summer Stem Activities

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

Silas Holt-Agriculture and Coding camps
Vivienne Eaton-On Demand Youth Leadership Program
Nathan Cloutier-Hack Club Horizons Nexus Hackathon
Katherine Kardy-BLAST camp
Brad Rottenborn-SCAROB robotics
Mahima Sethumadhavan-Carillion Summer of Service
Colin Ray– Virginia Western mechatronics
Sam Glenn-FBRI print lab manager
Eli Peters-VASTS summer academy
Tara Farrokhpoor-Summer Residential Governor's school for Math Science and Technology
Willow Boucher-Radford Women in STEM camp
Zara Bhowawsingh-EMT certification and volunteer leader at Carilion
Henry Fedak-Summer Residential Governor's school for Medicine and Health Sciences
Ron Guillaume-BLAST camp
Annalee Campbell-Volunteer at Roanoke Memorial Hospital
Atharva Sathe-Robotics Summer camp
Khushi Vashi-Volunteer at Carilion Pediatrics and Salem VA hospital
Carter Walls-Mechatronics camp at Virginia Western
Cole Peters-Gateway Camp
Rory Grant-Electrical camp
Amirah Rascoul-shadowed at dentist office
Max Weiss-volunteered at University of Delaware Marine Biology lab
Nicholas Young-SCAROB robotics
Amelia Karolyi-BLAST camp and volunteer at Children's Science camp
Ryan Hubbard-Summer Residential Governor's school for Agriculture
Helena Longstreth-Hollins STEM camp
Anika Parashar-working in Virginia Tech electronics lab
Kai Warren-internship at Brown Lab at Virginia Tech

Students were also busy with: robotics team, shadowing and volunteering at area libraries, doctor's offices and hospitals, NASA Space Camp, and research at Virginia Tech and FBRI

