

DATES TO REMEMBER:

FEB 18 CONFERENCE DAY
MAR 6 INTERIM 4
MAR 12 ELECTIVE SHOPPING DAY
MAR 16 WESTERN VIRGINIA REGIONAL FAIR
MAR 19 STEM CAREER PANEL

RVGS Newsletter

Issue 5
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Project Forum 2019: A Resounding Success

Message from the Director

Counselor's Corner

Congratulations on surviving another intense and exciting Intersession and Project Forum. Second semester has begun and it will be spring before we know it!

Our elective shopping day will be on March 12th and the elective registration form will be due to me on March 14th. Please look for emails about this process as we get closer to those dates. I will also begin meeting with 11th graders individually this month to discuss their overall college plans, to answer any questions that they may have and to give them an overview of the things they should be doing and thinking about if they aren't already.

One important date that you should go ahead and mark on the calendar is our Senior Dinner, which has been scheduled for May 6th at Hotel Roanoke. Invitations will be mailed home the Monday we return from spring break.

Spring may still be a few weeks away, but we are already looking ahead to the many activities that spring brings. Students are preparing for AP tests, SOL tests and SAT/ACT 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 contact me.

On Saturday, February 2nd, 264 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 "Most Enthusiastic," "Most Artistic Build" and "Most Promising Marketable Product."

Project Forum is always exciting and extraordinary, and this year's event was no exception. Students studied everything from CASK mutant mice to silver nanoparticles to biofuels, and each of the four elements was thoroughly investigated. Their research was not for the fainthearted – one student worked with blood, another with wastewater, and still another with staphylococcus.

The greatest number of students (50) chose to work in the Engineering Mechanics field, and that field tied with Animal Sciences for the greatest number of projects entered (29). Project titles ranged from one word to 23, and the longest title word – Immunohistochemistry – was made up of 20 letters. More ties occurred for first-place than any other (10), and of the 30 projects that won first place, just 6 of them were carried out by partners. Siblings both won their sections in Plant Sciences, which means they'll compete head-to-head at Regionals. Five Lukes won place awards, making it the luckiest name of the fair.

Seventeen students showcased their talents at the Art Exhibit, and every Lab Rat who spent Intersession on campus made the slideshow. Over 700 raffle tickets were sold, and two dozen happy

entrants won everything from college swag to custom lamps to elegant jewelry. The woman who won the signed, framed, Eric Fitzpatrick Texas Tavern print wanted it so badly she bought 100 raffle tickets and bet them all on the print. At Gov. School, even our parents are good at math.

The entire Forum ran like clockwork, our students presented themselves and their projects admirably, and the awards ceremony was standing room only. Oh, what a day to remember!

Very special thanks for our very special day to:

- * Over 150 parents, local businesses, and community supporters who generously donated items to the Raffle and cash to the Annual Appeal, which raised more than \$35,000 – a new record! – to support innovative student research at RVGS
- * Over 70 judges who encouraged our young scientists and evaluated 167 science projects at the event
- * Dozens of volunteers who prepared and served a delicious lunch to the judges, worked a shift at the Raffle, and ensured the Raffle's success by soliciting items from the community
- * Governor's School faculty for their commitment to their students and dedication to excellence in scientific research
- * Co-chairs Kim Morrill and Lisa Nielsen for their efforts in organizing this year's Raffle

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

Life has settled back into the normal routine after Intersession, and courses are off and running with second semester material. I'd like to express my deep pride and excitement about all the amazing work our students were able to accomplish on their research projects during the month of January.

Our commitment to research during Intersession is one of the features that makes education at RVGS truly unique, and I appreciate how focused the students are on using that time well to strive for excellence. Over the next month, we will have a large number of students advancing to district and regional fairs, competing for the opportunity to move on to the state and international levels. Good luck to everyone moving on!

I am truly humbled by the level of support our parents and community showed toward RVGS through the Annual Appeal this year. Between direct donations and the raffle at Project Forum, I am pleased to report that we raised \$35,440 to support our students—more than \$10,000 over our initial goal. Thank you again to Lisa Nielsen and Kim Morrill for their work heading up the fundraising effort.

As always, I invite you to reach out to me for a discussion if you have any concerns or comments.

Alumni Spotlight on Danielle Burks



A 1988 graduate, Danielle Burks also attended William Fleming High School, participated in band, and held an internship with Roanoke's Commonwealth Attorney's office.

Danielle attended the Governor's School for two years and found her passion in technology.

What were your goals after leaving RVGS?

I wanted to become a judge but became disillusioned with the legal system, so I decided to focus on business.

What did you accomplish in the first five years after graduation?

I graduated from the University of Virginia in 1992. Years later, I obtained my MBA from Virginia Tech (but I will ALWAYS be a 'Hoo!).

What is your current role, and what are your job duties?

My title is **Business Systems Consultant** or **Business Analyst**. I am a liaison between the business and the technology teams, writing business requirements for changes to the mortgage loan origination system using waterfall and agile methodologies. I also mentor and coach new team members. I recently celebrated my 25th anniversary with my company.

What is your career aspiration in the next 5 to 10 years?

To retire!

Have you acquired any special skills or received any special recognition or honors?

I was selected as a member of one of the first division Diversity Councils established at my company. As one of the top-producing team leaders for the local MS Society's Walk MS, I represented my company at a conference in Orlando, FL.

What are your hobbies or community service activities?

I enjoy working with at-risk children. I also serve the community as a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

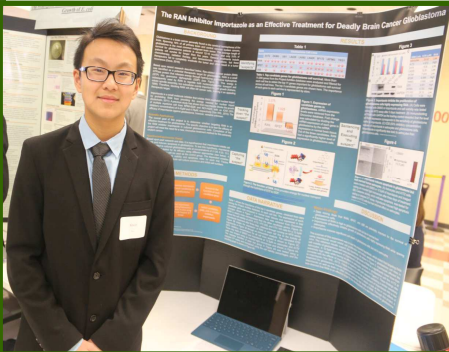
How has your Gov. School experience assisted your professional, educational and personal growth?

The courses I completed during my time at RVGS enhanced my ability to focus on difficult topics that didn't interest me. I realized I didn't want to focus on science or math in my career, but I knew that I liked computers and working with technology.

Any advice you would like to share with current students?

Enjoy your time and learn as much as you can! The knowledge and skills you develop at RVGS will translate to virtually any career path.

- Siclinda Canty-Elliott



Kevin Sheng Attends AACR Conference

Last year, Kevin worked in Dr. Samy Lamouille's lab at VTCRI and advanced to the state science fair with his project on grade 4 glioblastoma, the deadliest form of brain cancer. In his effort to find a therapeutic option, Kevin came across importazole, a recently-developed small-molecule inhibitor, and Kevin's experiments found the compound highly efficient in killing off glio cells in vitro without harming healthy human brain cells.

Kevin submitted his findings to the American Association of Cancer Research (AACR) and was invited to present at AACR's Special Program for High School Students in New Orleans in November. Kevin spent a full day sharing research with other students, learning about cancer research and prevention from leading scientific experts, and exploring career opportunities in the cancer field. Though Kevin's dad said it was a "fun experience to watch these young minds shining," Kevin's interest in the day was more practical. "I got the chance to spread my research, get new ideas, learn how experts go about their own research, and find out what's significant now," he said. "It was a good experience." As it turned out, Kevin's interest in New Orleans happened to be practical, too, and another good experience – "my first beignet!"



Dr. Kendra Sewell Visits RVGS

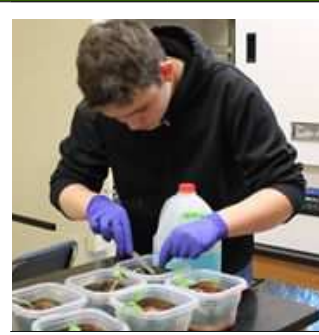
Dr. Kendra Sewell is an assistant professor of biological sciences at Virginia Tech, and in her lab she studies how neural and behavioral processes, and the environmental and developmental factors that impact them, contribute to animal survival and reproductive success. In December Dr. Sewell visited RVGS and brought blood samples from zebra finches, and our Lab Rats used molecular biology techniques to determine the complement of sex chromosomes in both the male and female birds. Dr. Sewell talked with students about her research, and about how the methods they're learning at Gov. School are routinely used by scientists to monitor sex ratios in bird populations in the wild. Thank you, Dr. Sewell, for this real-world exposure for our students!

TheraPets Visits RVGS

On January 28th, 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 weren't mating, mustard plants that weren't growing, and robotic arms that weren'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!



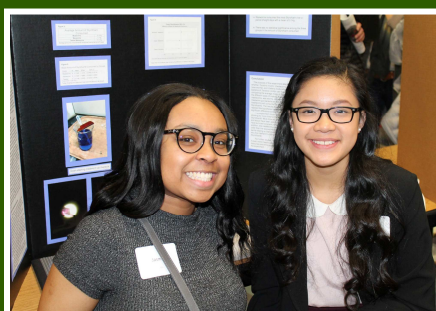
Behind the Scenes at Intercession



Student Project Forum 2019



Thank you to our RVGS Project Forum Alumni Judges for spending the day evaluating and encouraging our young scientists! We appreciate you, Annie Barnes, Casey Burton, Thomas Duckwall, Lydia Higgs, Se Jeong, Varun Kavuru, Zachary Kemp, Jonah Orevillo (not pictured), Jillian Pettygrove, Emily Plunkett, Johnathan Proctor, JP Stewart, Nicolena Stiles, Anh Tran, Lucy Travers, and Brooke Williams!



Want to see hundreds more pictures of your Lab Rats?!



us on



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RVGS
LabRats