



INSTITUTE REPORT

Volume 51, Number 3, November 2022

New Directors Bringing Experience and Strategy

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Rat Challenge

Rat Challenge activities, including the high ropes course, trail runs, rappelling, trust falls, and rifle bayonet training, kicked off on Sept. 1 and culminates with Rat Olympics on Founders Day, Nov. 11. The vigorous 10-week program provides leadership opportunities for upper-class cadets, while at the same time stretching rats physically and mentally, and enabling each of them to overcome any self-imposed limits with which they may be confronted.—VMI Photos Andrew Partridge '24.



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The Institute Report, VMI's monthly newsletter, publishes eight issues during each academic year. Inquiries, suggestions, news items, and address changes should be directed to Editor, Institute Report, VMI Communications and Marketing, Lexington, VA 24450-0304; 540-464-7207; or VMIREport@vmi.edu.

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On the Cover: 1st Sgt. Zach Krietenstein skydives into Foster Stadium before the game against East Tennessee State University on Oct. 8.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.


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VMI Welcomes New Directors of Admissions and Financial Aid

By Marianne Hause

VMI recently appointed new staff members to two essential positions: Lt. Col. Joseph Hagy has filled the role of director of admissions, and Lt. Col. Shannon Eskam is the new director of financial aid.

Dr. John Young, chief of staff, said of their arrival, “In the rapidly changing landscape of college enrollment, Lieutenant Colonel Eskam and Lieutenant Colonel Hagy will bring contemporary financial aid and admissions skills, respectively, to the Institutes’ renewed enrollment management mission. We are thrilled to onboard two experienced professionals to lead mission-critical functions of the Institute.”

Hagy, who grew up in Virginia’s lower peninsula, most recently served as director of student services and chief student affairs officer overseeing admissions, recruitment, financial aid, veterans’ services, and academic advising at Mountain Gateway Community College (formerly Dabney S. Lancaster Community College) in Clifton Forge, Virginia. His previous roles at Mountain Gateway included retention coordinator and dual enrollment coordinator, and he taught student development, business management, and team leadership courses as an adjunct instructor. He also served as executive director of the Mountain Gateway Community College Educational Foundation. He holds a master’s degree in executive leadership from Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia and a bachelor’s degree from Longwood University in Farmville, Virginia.

As director of admissions, Hagy plans for strategic growth over the next five years, incorporating the help of ROTC, staff cadets responsible for recruiting and public affairs, faculty, and alumni organized in teams called “tiger teams,” a term made famous by NASA during the Apollo 13 lunar landing mission. A “tiger team” is a specialized, cross-functional work team brought together to identify and solve a specific problem. Each team will be led by members of Hagy’s department. “VMI is filled with eager and energetic champions who recognize our enrollment challenges and want to be a part of the solution. Our admissions team is top-notch and truly believes in VMI’s mission. The entire Institute and alumni



Lt. Col. Joseph Hagy

base are rallying behind the concept of enrollment management being a post-wide responsibility. The opportunity, experience, and return-on-investment that a VMI education provides young men and women is second to none. I am proud to be a part of such a world-class organization,” he said.

Hagy believes the admissions process should be proactive in making connections with potential students, and VMI should maintain contact with them from time of initial interest through matriculation. He wants to focus on the underserved and underrepresented groups: female, minorities, first generation to VMI, and students of low-income. “Often, members of these underrepresented groups may want to attend VMI, but feel there are obstacles preventing them. I want to be able to remove any barriers in their way. I use the metaphor of a garden hose that is pinched preventing the water from flowing. We need to work out those kinks,” he explained.

Hagy comes from a military family. His father served 32 years in the Army Reserves and the National Guard. His grandfather was a platoon leader in the first wave storming of Omaha Beach during World War II, and was awarded two Purple Hearts. “The values instilled in me all my life, that of service before self, is what attracts me to VMI. The mission, culture, and opportunities here are what makes it a wonderful place to work,” said Hagy.



Lt. Col. Shannon Eskam

Hagy resides in Buena Vista, Virginia, has three school-aged children, and is engaged to be married. He enjoys coaching baseball and has coached for both Rockbridge County High School and Parry McCluer High School, as well as his sons’ baseball teams. “My daughter has started to play softball, so I may get to coach her too,” he mused.

Eskam comes to VMI directly from Casper, Wyoming where she served as the director of financial aid, deputy Title IX coordinator, enrollment services supervisor, and Veterans Affairs certifying official at Casper College. Prior to Casper College, she worked at Gillette College in Gillette, Wyoming as the assistant director of financial aid services. She concedes that Wyoming is quite far and somewhat different from Virginia, but she and her family were ready for a change. “There is a rich history here in Virginia, and I want my children to explore the area and learn from all the opportunities it affords. Both my husband and I grew up in a town similar to Lexington, which has a wonderful family atmosphere. Everyone here has been extremely supportive and kind to me,” she said.

Eskam plans to build relationships across post and be strategic and systematic in her work. “I want to make the financial aid process as seamless as possible. There are federal funds and state funds available, and we

Continued on next page

have so many fantastic donors with whom I look forward to meeting and working,” she said. She wants to help recruit and attract more students and maintain enrollment and retention. “I want to be a good steward with the funds we receive, and do well by our cadets, donors, and the entire Institute.”

Eskam earned her doctorate degree in higher education administration and a

bachelor’s degree in communication with an emphasis in marketing from the University of Wyoming in Laramie, Wyoming. She holds a master’s degree in organizational management from Chadron State College in Chadron, Nebraska. She is a member of the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, Rocky Mountain Association of Student Financial Aid

Administrators, Wyoming Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, and Association of Title IX Administrators.

Eskam and her husband reside in Lexington, Virginia with their two school-aged children and two dogs. The family loves to spend time outdoors together, especially near water where they enjoy boating and kayaking. ✨

D-Day Memorial Visit

The Rat Mass visited the National D-Day Memorial in Bedford, Virginia on Saturday, Sept. 24, to learn about the sacrifices made by Allied soldiers during the invasion of Normandy on June 6, 1944. While there, rats heard the story of the invasion and about the incredible loss of life, which especially impacted the small community of Bedford. Afterward, they participated in a wreath-laying ceremony.—VMI Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



POST BRIEFS

Outstanding Faculty Nominations

Three VMI professors have been nominated for the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) Outstanding Faculty Awards, which have recognized college faculty for excellence in teaching, research, and public service for more than 30 years. Col. Spencer Bakich, professor of international studies, is nominated in the Baccalaureate category. Also nominated in the Baccalaureate category is Lt. Col. Ashleigh Smyth, associate professor of biology. Maj. Michael LaRocca, assistant professor

of psychology has been nominated in the Rising Star category. Each submission completed by the dean's office includes details on each person's accomplishments, recognition, teaching style, research, service to the Institute and community, as well as letters of support from colleagues and cadets. Recipients of the Outstanding Faculty Awards are announced in the spring.

McDonald Wins Jerome Stern Award

Col. Rob McDonald's essay "Imagining Harry Crews: The Landscape of A Childhood" won the 2022 Jerome Stern Award for the best article published in *Studies in American Culture*. The award was presented Oct. 13 at the annual meeting of the American Studies Association in the South in

New Orleans, Louisiana. The article is the latest in a series of publications that combine photography and writing to explore significant places associated with literary figures. McDonald is a professor of English and fine arts and associate dean for academic affairs. 📷



Fall Open Houses

Families check in and explore post on Friday, Sept. 23 at the first Admissions Open House of the semester. Nearly every department has a hand in the events, which include tours for the prospective cadets and their parents, visiting classes, eating in Crozet Hall, hearing from leadership, learning about extracurricular opportunities, and attending a parade. The S5 cadets are very active in the process, assisting with check-in, tours, and panels. The visiting students also get to stay for a night in barracks to get a better understanding of cadet life. The fall events took place Sept. 23–24, Sept. 30–Oct. 1, and Nov. 4–5. Three open houses are scheduled for the spring semester and registration is now open for high school juniors and seniors at www.vmi.edu/admissions-and-aid/visit. –VMI Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin and Kelly Nye.



Ingersoll Solves Artwork Mystery

By Marianne Hause

Famous artwork has gone missing in the past, like “Poppy Flowers” by Vincent van Gogh or “Portrait of a Young Man” by Raphael, and most people know the Hollywood depiction of the Ark of the Covenant packed in an unmarked crate and lost forever in a government storage building. Lt. Col. Catharine Ingersoll, associate professor of art history in the Department of English, Rhetoric, and Humanistic Studies, was recently instrumental in solving a similar mystery when she was called upon to confirm the identity of two 16th century stained glass panels discovered in storage at the Reading Public Museum (RPM) in Reading, Pennsylvania.

The panels, which depict the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, and the Virgin and Christ child, have been in the collection of the RPM since they were donated in 1933, but scholars worldwide lost track of their whereabouts. They had been removed from display in 2012 for gallery renovations and, at that time, were described only as “16th century Baumgartner panels from Nuremberg” with the artist unknown and the patron solely identified by his last name, Baumgartner.

In preparation for reintroducing the panels into the gallery earlier this year, research was undertaken by the RPM’s curator to see if more information could be attained using the panels’ inscriptions and known origin. As research progressed, two panels similar in artistic style to those at the RPM were found in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (The Met) in New York, New York, and they were credited to artist, Hans Wertinger, who was court painter to Ludwig X, Duke of Bavaria. The panels at The Met were also inscribed with the Baumgartner family name as patron.

Wertinger was the subject of Ingersoll’s doctoral dissertation. She is considered to be the foremost expert on Wertinger in the



Lt. Col. Catharine Ingersoll poses with a photograph of the two 16th century stained glass panels for which she confirmed the identity of the artist, patron, and original location for the Reading Public Museum in Reading, Pennsylvania.—VMI Photo by Marianne Hause.

English-speaking world, and a scholar of southern German visual and material culture in the late medieval and Renaissance periods, so she was contacted by the curator at the RPM to contribute her professional opinion of the panels. “The panels were made by Hans Wertinger and his workshop, in Landshut, Germany,” she confirmed. “They were commissioned by Peter Baumgartner and his wife, Anna von Trenbach, for their family burial chapel in the parish church in Mining, Austria, and completed in 1524.

The panels were two of at least seven stained and painted windows adorning the choir and family chapel,” she said. Other stained glass windows removed from the chapel are now part of the collection at The Met and the Bavarian National Museum in Munich, Germany.

Ingersoll spoke at the unveiling of the reinstalled panels at the RPM earlier this year. The panels are now exhibited in front of a lighted box, so the colors and details of the stained glass can be fully appreciated. The description of the work is displayed next to it, with full and complete information about the artist, patron and original location.

Ingersoll, who fell in love with art history in high school, said it was very rewarding to help the RPM correctly identify the panels. “It is so fun to be a part of the art world in this way, to give

Wertinger his laurels and help this small museum,” she stated.

“The mystery of how the panels were incorrectly identified may be from lack of a clear chain of ownership after being removed from the chapel. It’s not unusual for a piece as old as these, to be bought and sold multiple times, then donated without any sort of documentation crediting the artist,” explained Ingersoll.

Ingersoll teaches many courses at VMI including The Language of Art, History of Art, Art of Medieval Europe, and Art of Renaissance Europe. She plans to travel to Germany next summer to conduct additional research on the chapel in which the stained glass panels were originally hung, as well as learning more about the Baumgartner family. ❁

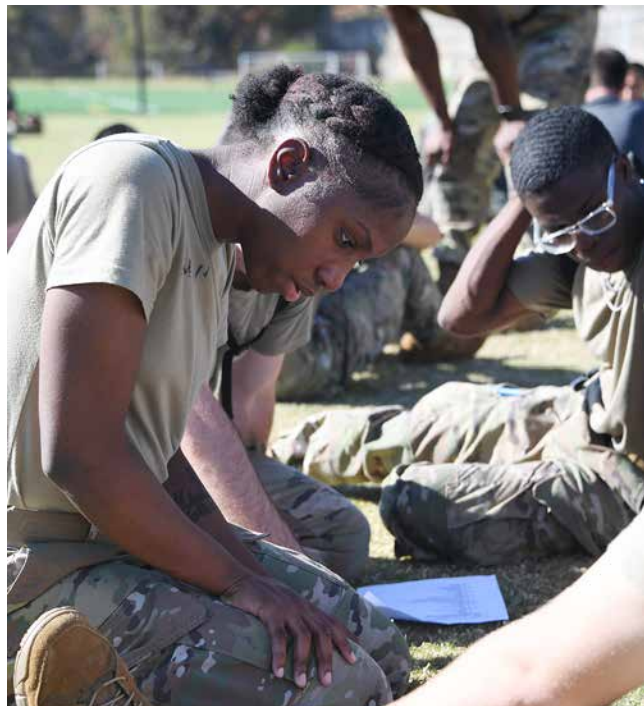


The stained glass panels by Hans Wertinger, depicting the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, and the Virgin and Christ child, originally hung in the parish church in Mining, Austria, and are now on display at the Reading Public Museum in Reading, Pennsylvania.—VMI Photo by Marianne Hause.



Fall FTX

Cadets participate in various field training exercises—FTX—Oct. 14–16. Utilizing various locations on post, as well as McKethan Park and the Goshen Scout Reservation, cadets learned land navigation skills, participated in team building exercises, trained in various mission scenarios, and practiced tactical maneuvers. Nearly 20 cadets in the newly-formed Coast Guard detachment went to Portsmouth, Virginia for tours and briefings. Several non-commissioning cadets had an opportunity for ride-alongs with the Chesterfield Fire Department in Chesterfield, Virginia during FTX weekend.— VMI Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin, Andrew Partridge '24, and courtesy of Command Sgt. Maj. Suzanne Rubenstein and Chesterfield Fire and EMS.



Family Weekend 2022

By Maj. Michelle Ellwood

Fall colors were just starting to show during Family Weekend, held Oct. 7–9. The weather was ideal for activities at VMI, coming off the remnants of Hurricane Ian the weekend before.

“We couldn’t have asked for nicer weather to celebrate Family Weekend this year,” said Kathy Peila, co-president of the Parents Council. “The schedule provided so many ways for family and friends to observe cadets in action—whether on the playing fields, in the arts, or on parade. There truly was something for everyone!”

Families were buzzing around post starting Friday morning. The Parents Council held meetings throughout the day in Marshall Hall, while other parents visited classrooms, met with faculty and advisors, and ate in the PX or Crozet Hall. The evening was filled with performances, including jazz music by the VMI Commanders and a Glee Club concert. The VMI Theatre opened their weekend with the cast’s first performance of “The Lighter Side of Military Life” in Gillis Theater, with two more shows throughout the weekend.

Saturday was another early morning for families, with tailgating on the Parade Ground starting at 7 a.m. The Parents Council provided a hearty breakfast and engagement for families and for cadets without family members in town for the weekend. Saturday also allowed for more faculty and advisor meetings, and a barracks open house. Institute Honor Cadets and their families had a special reception prior to the parade stepping off at 10:45.



The VMI Commanders perform during the jazz concert held Oct. 7 in Memorial Hall.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

Athletic events were spread around post on Saturday afternoon with men’s rugby competing against Virginia Commonwealth University on North Post. The club team had a strong win 60-14. Overlapping with the rugby match was the Keydet football team competing against East Tennessee State University in Foster Stadium. The Keydets fell to the Buccaneers 44-21. On Patchin Field, the men’s soccer team fell just shy of their competitor, University of North Carolina-Greensboro, losing 1-0.

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Families and friends attend the parade on Oct. 8.—VMI Photo by Andrew Partridge '24.



Kenneth and Sharon Quigg pose with their son Kolby Quigg '24 and friend Stone Summers '24 on Oct. 7.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.



Korey Bridy '23 runs the ball against ETSU Oct. 8.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

Sunday was an opportunity for families to participate in several religious services in Memorial Hall.

As always, families could visit the Keydet bookstore, as well as the VMI Museum and the Jackson House Museum, Preston Library, and enjoy many of the restaurants and shops in downtown Lexington.

As Family Weekend wrapped up, Peila, along with other families, looked ahead to the special events in the near future, including



VMI Theatre performed "The Lighter Side of Military Life" during Family Weekend in Gillis Theater.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

Founders Day, Ring Figure, and rivalry competition. "We will be celebrating the 2nd Class having received their rings just before the start of Thanksgiving furlough, as well as rooting for the Silver Shako to come back to VMI, where it belongs!" 🍁

Three-Legged Stool

Scout Ripley '23 was honored as this year's Three-Legged Stool Award recipient at the annual Keydet Club Scholarship Banquet on Sunday, Oct. 23, in Marshall Hall. He poses with Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, superintendent; Bland Massie Jr. '77, Keydet Club president; and Jim Miller, VMI athletic director. Ripley is double majoring in history and English, captain of the VMI lacrosse team, member of the Institute Honors Program, and plans to commission into the Marine Corps upon graduation. The award goes to a cadet-athlete who embodies excellence in leadership, academics, and athletics. The other finalists for this year's award were basketball player Sam Wolfe '23 and London Yerasimides '23, member of the swimming and diving team.—Photo courtesy of Micalyn Miller, VMI Alumni Agencies.



Class of 1997 Check Presentation

The Class of 1997 presented its 25th Reunion gift of \$2,241,597.97 to the Institute during the football game against Furman Oct. 22. Pictured are (from left) Meade King '85, VMI Foundation chief operating officer; Cadet J. Addison Hagan V '24; Sgt. Maj. Thomas "Tom" Sowers, Corps of Cadets sergeant major; J. Addison Hagan IV '97, reunion co-chairman; Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, superintendent; Dave Hudock '97, reunion co-chairman; Ed Ramatowski '97; Jake Hickman '97; Joe Howard '97; Ed Bonham '97; Jack Polce '97; and Matt Coley '97.—Photo courtesy of Micalyn Miller, VMI Alumni Agencies.

New Pipe Band Director Brings Scottish Authenticity

By Marianne Hause

They can be heard from miles away. Originally, they were instruments of war, designed to inspire soldiers into battle. In modern times, they instill pride, honor, dignity, and delight when heard during pageantry, and feelings of tenderness and warmth during memorials, often evoking tears, especially when the hymn “Amazing Grace” is played. They are bagpipes, national musical instrument of Scotland.

In Lexington, the VMI Pipe Band not only instills pride in the Corps of Cadets, but to everyone who hears and sees them in post parades and in community holiday parades. The Pipe Band, which serves as musical ambassadors throughout the United States, has recently added Scottish authenticity to its ranks in the form of its new director, Maj. Brian Donaldson.

Donaldson is originally from Cardenden in Fife, a small mining village in Scotland. When he was growing up, each local mine, or colliery, had its own pipes and drums corps, providing a spirit of community and kinship. The corps were supported by the miners who each contributed one penny of each week’s wages. Both Donaldson’s father and grandfather were miners. His father, himself a renowned bagpiper and teacher, taught Donaldson to play.

After graduating from high school, Donaldson served his apprenticeship at Inveran House, a bagpipe maker at Edinburgh, the capital city of Scotland. “I commuted 45 miles one-way every day by train to Edinburgh from my hometown. I left home at 6 a.m. and didn’t get back until 7 p.m.,” said Donaldson.

At a young age Donaldson played with the world-famous Dysart and Dundonald Pipe Band, winning every major championship



Maj. Brian Donaldson, new pipe band director, instructs cadets on how to play the bagpipes during class in Carroll Hall.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

in the pipe band world. Later, he enlisted in the Scots Guards, whose primary duty is to guard the British monarch, and served with the regiment all over the world. He passed his pipe majors course at the Army School of Piping at Edinburgh Castle in 1982. Later,



Maj. Brian Donaldson poses in his full bagpipe dress complete with kilt, plaid, and feather bonnet, as Pipe Major in Scotland.—Photo courtesy of Maj. Brian Donaldson.

he soldiered in the Falklands War and served tours of duty in Northern Ireland during the height of the unrest. He then was posted to the Army School of Piping as an instructor for three years. He was subsequently promoted to pipe sergeant in 1993, then to the pipe major, the leading musician in a bagpipe band, in 1995. “I played many times for her majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, at Balmoral Castle and in her birthday parades, called the Trooping of the

Colour. I had opportunities to dance with her and with Princess Diana as well,” reminisced Donaldson.

In 1998, Donaldson became pipe major at the Army training regiment in Glencourse, Scotland. He served out his 22-year military career teaching at the Army School of Bagpipe Music and Highland Drumming in Edinburgh, Scotland.

Donaldson became one of the most renowned pipers in the British Army. He has earned many awards in multiple competitions including the Highland Society of London’s Gold Medal, the most coveted award in piping; the Bratach Gorm, the highest prize given by the Scottish Piping Society of London; and the Donald MacDonald Quaich. He has been invited numerous times to the famous Glenfiddich Piping Championships at Blair Castle in Pirthshire, Scotland.

After a successful military career, Donaldson returned to his trade as a bagpipe craftsman. He purchased the company where he apprenticed and changed its name to Inveran Bagpipe Makers. “To me, the name Inveran House sounded like a hotel,” he quipped.

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In 2012, he was offered a position teaching at St. John's Northwestern Military Academy in Delafield, Wisconsin, where he taught for seven years. He taught at Missouri Military Academy in Mexico, Missouri for two years before accepting the position of director of the pipes and drums at VMI. "VMI is a first-class school, very impressive," he stated. "I want to capitalize on the fantastic job my predecessor did and take the pipe band to the next level. I want them to be the best. I

want to take the band to competitions and have them compete as a band as well as individual players. Competing is the best way to reach a higher level," he said.

Col. John Brodie, director of music, believes Donaldson has already had an impact on the Pipe Band. "I look forward to working with him in the years ahead. I also hope he can teach me the pipes. I tried one-time years ago to learn but it was very difficult," he said.

Donaldson lives in Lexington. He has a son living in Australia, and a son and two daughters as well as six grandchildren still living in Scotland. ❀



Learn more about Donaldson here.

Cadet Internship Serves and Strengthens Refugee Families

By Marianne Hause

Imagine being a 7-year-old child from a foreign country, who has sought refuge with your family in the United States. In this new country, only your family speaks your native language, all the people you encounter dress different, everything you see looks different, the air smells different, food tastes different than what you are accustomed, and your future is uncertain. These are the circumstances of someone who Harris Burton '23, a cadet majoring in economics and business with a concentration in global business and a minor in French, taught during her summer internship with the Shepherd Higher Education Consortium on Poverty (SHECP) program hosted by Washington & Lee University. For over 20 years, SHECP has provided service opportunities for students to collaborate with communities to address the causes and consequences of poverty.

According to Dr. Sabrina Laroussi, associate professor of modern languages and director for SHECP at VMI, the Institute sponsors up to five cadets to participate in the summer internship program. "The eight-week internship is an opportunity to serve and strengthen impoverished communities as well as gain valuable work and leadership experience. Cadets are paired with nonprofit organizations, with areas of focus in education and youth outreach, community, and individual services, legal or business, and healthcare or wellness. Cadets live in the areas they serve, and SHECP provides housing and nominal funds to cover common expenses and transportation costs," she explained.

Students who wish to participate in SHECP must apply and be accepted into



Harris Burton '23

the program, successfully complete an accompanying class, keep a journal during the internship, and attend the opening and closing observances of the program. Burton had previously taken two VMI courses that counted toward the class requirement: Economic Development in Indian Country, and Institutions of Economic Development.

The nonprofit Burton was paired with was the New Arrivals Institute (NAI) in Greensboro, North Carolina. NAI was developed in the late 1990s to meet the needs of refugees arriving to the area. They provide classes in the English language, employment readiness, and citizenship readiness. They also provide a summer program for school-aged children called Summer Literacy, Art, Music & Movement (SLAMM) which provides academic enrichment and fun activities. Burton, who speaks French as a second language, worked closely with French speaking children from the African nation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. "We had about 40 children in SLAMM including those from Afghanistan,

Myanmar, Rwanda, Sudan, Syria, and Venezuela in addition to the Congo. We taught them songs, played games with them, taught them exercises, and cooked for them," stated Burton.

Kristian Hultgren, refugee school impact coordinator for NAI, stated that Harris' communication and teaching abilities allowed her to cross language barriers. "Working effectively with the program's Arabic, Dari, and Pashto interpreters, she was able to teach comprehensive lessons to groups of children from all different parts of the world from a great diversity of backgrounds," he said.

Many of the refugees Burton worked with were highly educated professionals in their countries, and they are having to start their lives all over again in the United States. Many fled their home country from fear of persecution for reason of political opinion or religious faith. "The refugees I met and assisted over the summer were the sweetest people. They want very much to successfully assimilate into our society. I absolutely fell in love with the children. They were so delightful and so dear," said Burton. At her departure at the end of the summer, the children showered her with homemade cards wishing her well.

Burton is an Institute Honors Program fellow, a facilitator for the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Program and cadet in charge of the ethics and debate team. She is originally from Colorado Springs, Colorado, where she attended Cheyenne Mountain High School, but now resides in Lexington, Virginia. After graduation, she hopes to attend the University of Virginia School of Law in Charlottesville, Virginia. ❀

Building BRIDGES Club Expands Opportunities for Cadets

By Marianne Hause

The Building BRIDGES Club is spanning to new lengths as it further connects cadets, faculty, and staff with the local community through civic engagement. Formed in 2014, the service club's initial focus was community service to organizations in the city of Lexington and Rockbridge County, an appropriate goal considering the deep-rooted bond between the people of those communities and the Institute. Recently though, the club has taken on additional objectives of sponsoring events and college debates, as membership has grown to nearly 50 participants.

According to Col. Valentina Dimitrova-Grajzl, professor in the Department of Economics and Business and faculty co-advisor for BRIDGES, local organizations the club has assisted includes



Grant Andrews '24 works on a Habitat for Humanity house earlier this semester. —Photo courtesy of Col. Valentina Dimitrova-Grajzl.



Suttipat Muangna '24 lays floorboards with a Habitat employee on a build site earlier this semester. —Photo courtesy of Col. Valentina Dimitrova-Grajzl.

Project Horizon, a nonprofit organization that works with survivors and victims of domestic and sexual violence; Habitat for Humanity; the SPCA; Boxerwood Nature Center & Woodland Garden; Timber Framers; Meals on Wheels; the Rockbridge Area Prevention Coalition's youth group; Rockbridge Area Community Services; and the "Be a Santa for a Senior" program, providing holiday cards to residents in assisted living facilities. Recently BRIDGES visited Bels Bees, an apiary located in Fairfield, Virginia. While there, they learned about the different

types of honey and the environmental impact on bees. They also learned about a group called "Hives for Heroes," a nonprofit that connects beekeepers with veterans, focusing not only on honey bee conservation but also a healthy transition out of service and fostering a lifelong hobby as well. "I am very proud of the Building BRIDGES Club and our cadet leaders over the years. We have worked hard and are making meaningful connections across post and in the surrounding communities. The residents of Lexington love the cadets, and the cadets are very cheerful and always eager to help. Our work through the club is very rewarding," said Dimitrova-Grajzl.

Sponsoring events has added an important dimension to the club allowing opportunities to grow in leadership, respect for others, and civility, according to Dr. Sabrina Laroussi, associate professor in the Department of Modern Languages and Cultures and co-advisor for BRIDGES. She stated that each semester the club sponsors a movie promoting gender equality. This semester's movie was "On the Basis of Sex," the story of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, her struggles for equal rights, and the early cases that lead to her nomination and confirmation as U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice. The film was co-sponsored with Preston Library and Sigma Delta Pi, the National Collegiate

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Cadets learn about beekeeping at Bels Bees in Fairfield, Virginia, on Oct. 22. —Photo courtesy of Col. Valentina Dimitrova-Grajzl.

Hispanic Honor Society. A follow-up virtual event to the film was held a few days later with two professors in the history department, Lt. Col. Mark Boonshoft and Maj. Madeleine Ramsey, who gave a brief presentation followed by discussion on Ginsburg and gender equality jurisprudence from her time at the ACLU to the landmark Supreme Court case of the United States v. Virginia in 1996, which allowed women to attend VMI. An additional event is planned for January when Dr. Laura Fairchild Brodie, visiting associate professor of English at Washington and Lee University will discuss her book, "Breaking Out: VMI and the Coming of Women." "We always like to have a follow-up event after we show the films. It promotes intelligent conversation and on-going discourse about the topic," said Laroussi.

In association with Braver Angels, a nonprofit dedicated to promoting civil

discourse, BRIDGES hosts college debates several times a year. Lt. Col. Sara Whipple, associate professor in the psychology department and co-advisor for BRIDGES states, "Topics of each debate often include sensitive issues where opinions may run passionately, so strict guidelines are enforced. Whoever wants to speak may do so uninterrupted and for a set period of time. The goal is to provide a place to express one's ideas without fear of negative repercussions, and to learn to listen to others' opinions courteously, and with an open mind."

BRIDGES also planned a special event in early November to celebrate the 25th anniversary of women being admitted to VMI. ✪

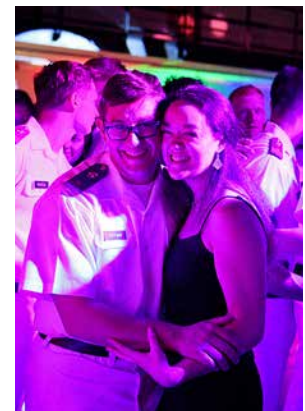


Brijesh Regeti '24 helps install siding on a Habitat site in September. —Photo courtesy of Col. Valentina Dimitrova-Grajzl.



Harvest Hop

The Harvest Hop, a homecoming dance for upper-class cadets, was held in Cocke Hall on Oct. 29. The theme for this year's hop was "1970's Disco," complete with disco mirror balls, colorful lights, a DJ, energetic music, good food and drink, and lots of smiles, laughter, and energy from the Corps. Andrew Henderson '23, a member of S7, the staff responsible for morale, welfare, and recreation, said, "The set up was laborious as always, but the S7 staff enjoys being able to create fun and enjoyable events for the Corps. All the cadets work hard academically and physically, so it's very important to provide events like this for them to enjoy and unwind." —VMI Photos by Andrew Partridge '24.





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Career Fair

VMI welcomed representatives from approximately 50 companies on Wednesday, Oct. 26 for the fall Career Fair in Marshall Hall. With the event having a focus on non-commissioning cadets, recruiters from various career fields including construction, defense, healthcare, tourism, and public safety talked about employment and internship opportunities within their organizations. Several universities were on hand to talk about postgraduate educational opportunities, as well. —VMI Photos by Kelly Nye.

