



INSTITUTE REPORT

VIRGINIA MILITARY INSTITUTE

Volume 50, Number 4, December 2021

Gov. Ralph Northam '81 Addresses Corps

By Maj. Michelle Ellwood

Between Founders Day and Ring Figure, two signature events at VMI, Gov. Ralph Northam '81 visited post on the evening of Nov. 15. He met briefly with Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, superintendent, before heading to Crozet Hall to have supper with cadets holding leadership positions.

He then joined faculty, staff, and the entire Corps of Cadets in Cameron Hall



Gov. Ralph Northam '81 addresses the Corps of Cadets in Cameron Hall Nov. 15.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

where he addressed the audience.

His remarks began by acknowledging another winning season for the Keydet football team, something he remembers from his cadetship. The football team has had winning records this year and in 2020, but these were the first since 1981, the year Northam graduated.

He highlighted honor and pride in traditions that the Corps is known for, like marching in

See Northam, page 5

VMI Celebrates Founders Day

By Maj. Michelle Ellwood

VMI celebrated the 182nd anniversary of the Institute's founding on a mild Nov. 11. The day was filled with pageantry, athleticism, and gratitude.

In the morning, 4th Class cadets participated in Rat Olympics. This event, held in the Corps Physical Training Facility, is a culmination of a 10-week physical education program known as Rat Challenge.

Later in the day, the Corps, along with faculty, staff, and special guests, joined together in Cameron Hall for a Founders Day

convocation honoring two alumni whose dedication to VMI over the years has impacted thousands of cadets.

Receiving the 2021 Distinguished Service Awards were Dr. Charles F. Bryan Jr. '69 and William A. Paulette '69. Thomas H. Zarges '70, president of the VMI Foundation, presented the awards. This is the first time this award has been presented since 2015, and it began in 1969, the year Bryan and Paulette wrapped

See Founders Day, page 12

Private Support Makes Peay Scholarships Possible

By Mary Price, VMI Alumni Agencies

For the first time, three cadets are benefiting from alumni support as Peay Merit Scholars this academic year.

Named for the Institute's 14th superintendent, Gen. J. H. Binford Peay III '62, the Peay Merit Scholarships are designed to reward excellence across all three domains of the VMI experience—academics, athletics, and the military—by providing selected cadets with a full-ride scholarship covering tuition, fees, room, and board. The scholarships can be renewed for up to four years.

"The long-term goal of the Peay Merit Scholars program is to raise enough funds to provide five scholarships in each class or 20 in the Corps," said Brig. Gen. Robert "Bob" Moreschi, Ph.D., dean of the faculty and deputy superintendent for academics. "Strategically, we want to provide our admissions and academic teams the ability to compete for talented, well-rounded students who may also be interested in attending federal service academies or top universities."

The Peay Merit Scholarships began with a small group of passionate alumni led by the late Donald "Donnie" Wilkinson '61, a former member of both the VMI Board of Visitors and the VMI Foundation Board of Trustees. As the founding chairman of the General J.H. Binford Peay III 1962 Endowment for Academic Excellence, Wilkinson envisioned a program that would strengthen VMI's academics while honoring Peay, who excelled across all three areas as a cadet before going on to a 35-year career in the U.S. Army and serving for 17 years as VMI's superintendent. The Peay Endowment Cabinet, which oversees the

fund's administration, is now headed by retired Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. John P. Jumper '66.

"We share Donnie Wilkinson's vision of a powerful academic program that not only attracts quality candidates but provides the tools to actively compete for the highest quality talent able to thrive in the VMI system," said Jumper. "Providing for a robust student base parallels other provisions of the Peay Endowment to recruit and reward top faculty, and to advance opportunities for VMI cadets and graduates to pursue careers in academic fields."



Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, retired Air Force Gen. John Jumper '66, and Brig. Gen. Bob Moreschi pose with Peay scholars Patrick J. Simmons '25 and Dominick J. Lalena '23 after presenting the awards to them.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

The inaugural Peay Scholars consist of two 2nd Class cadets, both majoring in electrical and computer engineering (ECE), and one 4th Class cadet, an international studies major. Cadets of any major are eligible for the Peay Endowment Scholarships.

Dominick J. Lalena '23 from Stafford, Virginia, plans to commission into the Army and would like to serve with the Cyber Corps. He's a member of the S2 staff, which supports cadets needing help with academics, a position he takes seriously since he was unsure about his own major—one with very high attrition—when he was

a rat. Lalena has worked hard and wants to help other cadets be successful academically. With that goal in mind, he's developed a mentorship program for ECE rats with activities such as study sessions, tutor sessions, book reading sessions, etc.

Lalena is "absolutely honored" to be one of VMI's first Peay Scholars and is grateful for the scholarship.

"For me, it's the biggest thing that's ever happened in my entire life besides, you know, coming to VMI in the first place," he stated. "And so I also subsequently forwarded that email [with the scholarship news] to all my teachers, thanking all of them for helping me get to this point, and that just kind of goes back to I'm just incredibly thankful for this. I still have the email pinned in my inbox. I look at it every day as a reminder of this is where hard work gets you. And to continue to work hard. Yeah, that was awesome."

It's been a long journey for someone who'd had some struggles in high school and didn't consider himself a strong student when he matriculated. Now, he wears academic stars and has a high cumulative GPA.

He's always been sure about VMI, though. It was the only school he applied to.

"VMI was really the only place I wanted to go to," he commented. "I knew that there was no other place that would really fit me and my desires. I had a very specific set of goals and a vision of who I wanted to be as an adult. And I knew that VMI would be the only place I could achieve that fully in the extent that I wanted to."

Lalena views alumni as "pillars of excellence" and is excited to join their ranks. "These are people who are valuable members of society, who contribute, who put service above self, who are selfless individuals who are always caring for others, and [are] always working hard," he stated. "You know, you can get that from another place, but no place will prepare you for that like VMI will."

Continued on next page

INSTITUTE REPORT

Volume 50, Number 4, December 2021

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. © 2021 Virginia Military Institute.

Director Col. Bill Wyatt
Editor Maj. Michelle Ellwood
Assistant Editor Kelly Nye
Designer Robbin Youngblood
Institute Report Staff
Malia Mantz '23
H. Lockwood McLaughlin
Eric Moore

Header photo on page 1 by
Kelly Nye

The Virginia Military Institute is committed to providing an environment that emphasizes the dignity and worth of every member of its community and that is free from harassment and discrimination based on race, sex, color, national origin, religion, age, veteran status, sexual orientation, pregnancy, genetic information, against otherwise qualified persons with disabilities, or based on any other status protected by law. In pursuit of this goal, any question of impermissible discrimination on these bases will be addressed with efficiency and energy and in accordance with VMI General Order 16. General Order 90 addresses complaints or reports of retaliation against those who have opposed practices prohibited by General Order 16, those who have filed complaints or reports of prohibited practices, and those who have testified or otherwise participated in enforcement of General Order 16. Questions regarding discrimination prohibited by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, or other federal law, may be referred to the VMI Inspector General and Title IX Coordinator, 212 Carroll Hall, VMI, Lexington, VA 24450, (540) 464-7072. Any cadet or prospective cadet having questions about disability services for students should contact the Director of the Center for Cadet Counseling and Disability Services, 448 Institute Hill, 2nd floor, Post Infirmary, Lexington, Va. 24450, (540) 464-7667. For employment-related disability services, contact the Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator in the VMI Human Resources Office, Lexington, VA 24450, (540) 464-7322.

COVID-19 information and current VMI protocols can be found at www.vmi.edu/COVID.

Binh Q. Tran '23 from Ashburn, Virginia, grew up in Vietnam and moved to the U.S. in 2015. He's a member of the Cadet Investment Club and jiu-jitsu club and part of the S2 staff. Tran is also an assistant investigator for the Cadet Equity Association.

Tran came to VMI because he wanted to commission in the Air Force and because of VMI's small class size, alumni network, and the physical, mental, and academic challenges VMI offers. He was "extremely happy" when he learned he would receive a Peay scholarship and immediately called his parents.

"I was really happy and really glad that I got the scholarship," said Tran, who is the first person in his family to go to college in the United States. "I'm extremely thankful to all the alumni who are making this happen and I feel like this is one of the reasons why VMI is one of the best schools in the U.S."

For Tran, giving back is imperative, and thus he's happy to be a member of the S2 staff. As a recent English language learner, Tran knows the importance of receiving assistance.

"I'm really glad that I'm able to help [cadets] out and make sure they can improve their performance in terms of academics," he noted.

Patrick J. Simmons '25 from Quantico, Virginia, is an international studies major. A member of Naval ROTC, he plans to commission into the Marine Corps. He came to VMI because of the challenge and because he felt like the Institute was one of the best places to learn about becoming a Marine. He considered the Naval Academy as well but saw a greater brotherhood and pride among VMI alumni. He is thankful for his scholarship and that people care enough about him and his goals and want to help him.

"I wouldn't have been able to come here if they didn't give me that money," Simmons stated. "I just feel very, very blessed."

As he begins his cadetship, Simmons strives to emulate the model of excellence set by generations of the Institute's alumni.



Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85 and Brig. Gen. Bob Moreschi present Binh Q. Tran '23 with the Peay Scholarship certificate.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

"I want to be a great person, as in the VMI way, like the three-legged stool, so academics, military training, and sportsmanship," he said. "And I think that's like the best way to be the most well-balanced person you could be because you've got to try hard in everything you do."

In addition to providing cadet scholarships, the Peay Endowment supports two other initiatives designed to increase academic excellence. The Peay Academic Excellence Chairs provide private funds to support some faculty positions, thus freeing state funds to be reallocated among all Institute faculty members.

Thanks partially to this approach, faculty salaries have risen by an average of 34% in the last five years, and on average, 16% of each faculty member's salary now comes from private funds. This rise in salaries is necessary to support the hiring and retention of top-notch faculty members.

In addition, the Peay Fellows program supports graduate studies for qualified alumni, with the expectation that they will come back and teach at the Institute afterward. ✪



Rat Olympics

Rat Olympics kicked off Founders Day for the Class of 2022 plus 3 on Nov. 11 in the Corps Physical Training Facility. The competition is the culmination of a 10-week physical education program and includes rock climbing, relay races, and tug-of-war. At a dinner the following week, Delta Company received the Stockwell Cup—awarded to the company that works the hardest and displays the best attitude through Rat Challenge, named for the late Col. Bill Stockwell.—VMI Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin and Malia Mantz '23.



inaugural parades in both Richmond and in Washington, D.C., including his own parade four years ago. He was the first VMI graduate to serve as governor of Virginia in more than a century.

With a quarter of the audience still immersed in the Rat Line, Northam talked about his first year at VMI. He joked about starting the fall semester with a girlfriend and a full head of hair, but quickly losing both. "It seems like just yesterday," he said.

He gives credit to VMI for providing the foundation that allowed him to be a U.S. Army veteran, a doctor, a husband of more than 30 years, a proud father, and governor. "I know many alumni would agree that we have been able to accomplish important things, especially in public service, because VMI prepared us to do so."

He admits he came to VMI and went through his college years not asking questions he maybe should have, and that he had a lot of learning to do. He didn't ask "why" about a lot of things, including why the statues were being saluted and why some symbols might be offensive. He just wanted to fly under the radar, avoid extra push-ups, and get through the day. In the 40 years since getting his VMI diploma, he said, "I've come to understand what a large and diverse world we live in."

Cadets will be prepared for their next ventures, whether in the military or private sector. With Virginia's high rankings in



Gov. Ralph Northam '81 speaks of his time as a cadet at VMI during his address to the Corps in Cameron Hall Nov. 15. —VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

business, investments in transportation, and workforce talent, Northam believes cadets have the opportunity be successful here in the Commonwealth. "VMI is the place that is preparing you for that future."

He emphasized several questions that leaders should ask themselves, and noted that these questions should also be asked to allow VMI to continue to produce generations of citizen-soldiers. These questions are focused on making sure that there is a

mission to have better days ahead, being competitive, reflecting the people directly served, and having a reputation of being welcoming to all backgrounds.

Northam did not stray from the high-profile year of controversy at VMI. "This year has been an incredibly difficult time for everyone

who loves this place. And I want you to know, that includes me." He reflected on the debate about allowing women to attend VMI and how that wasn't easily accepted by some. But good comes from change. "VMI has changed before, and the sun came up the next morning, even brighter."

The future is bright for VMI, Northam believes. He sees the recent changes, the strong leadership, and commitment to diversity as adaptations that will allow VMI to remain successful. "This country is crying out for the spirit of public service that so many VMI graduates have exemplified over the years."

His moments at the podium wrapped up with words many cadets wanted to hear by the commander-in-chief of the VMI Corps of Cadets: "I hereby grant amnesty to those cadets with penalty tours and confinement currently in effect!"

Wins agreed with the sentiment provided by Northam saying, "He certainly brought a message that will resonate with the cadets now, and into their adulthood. Diversity is an asset. They will be most successful in the workforce, in the military, whatever their future may be, by embracing diversity and change. The world is different from when he and I were cadets, and the world will continue to change. Our cadets will be ready." ❄



Malcolm McIntosh '24 and Travis Northam '24 talk to Gov. Ralph Northam '81 in Crozet Hall Nov. 15. —VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

More than 50 Inducted into ODK

By Maj. Michelle Ellwood and Madeleine Berry '22

More than 50 new members of Omicron Delta Kappa (ODK), the National Leadership Honor Society, were initiated on the evening of Nov. 9 at a ceremony held in Marshall Hall.

ODK was founded in 1914 at Washington & Lee University. Originally established as the Marshall Table in 1999, the VMI Circle was granted a charter in 2003. Selection is based on leadership, as well as accomplishment within the Corps and community service.

At a dessert reception catered by Parkhurst Dining, Chris Hulburt '22, president of the VMI ODK circle, welcomed all inductees and existing members of the organization.

Next to speak was the General Binford H. Peay III '62 Leader-in-Residence for the 2021-22

academic year, Lt. Gen. Gwen Bingham, an honorary inductee this year. Bingham emphasized how amazing it is to be a part of something like ODK where individuals can continue to grow as leaders.

The inductees took the oath to be a loyal servant to the community and uphold leadership responsibilities instilled in the bylaws of ODK. In addition to Bingham, this year's group of inductees included Col. Wade Bell, professor of biology; Jonathan Hadra '04, head baseball coach; Col. Dave Hall, director of international programs; Lt. Col. Ramoni Lasisi, associate professor of computer and information sciences; and Col. James "Jim" Squire, professor of electrical and



Lt. Gen. Gwen Bingham receives her ODK certificate from Col. Matt Swenty during the Nov. 9 induction ceremony.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

computer engineering. Also, 16 1st Class cadets, 20 2nd Class cadets, and 13 3rd Class cadets participated in the oath.

As each inductee went to the stage to receive a pin and certificate, they signed the VMI Circle's book that contains all members that have been inducted since 2003. The night closed with a brief moment of reflection, reminding each member to be open to the world and its opportunities it brings.

College sophomores being eligible for the society is new this year. Hulburt said in an interview in early October, "We're kind of viewing that as a chance to bring longevity to the organization."

Hulburt and others want to also get alumni more involved

to allow cadets to hear how the competency of leadership is executed post-graduation. He said, "We get the inside scoop on what it's like to be a leader here, but how do you apply it in the real world once you graduate?"

ODK activities took a halt in the height of the coronavirus pandemic, but Hulburt and others are ready to bring back the community service aspect of the program. "We're kind of at a pivotal moment. Because of the COVID restrictions last year, we weren't able to do much. We're trying to bring it back." ❀



Hannah Yoder '22 signs the VMI Circle's book that contains all VMI Omicron Delta Kappa members since 2003.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



Chris Hulburt '22, president of VMI ODK circle, addresses the audience in Gillis Theater during the ODK induction ceremony Nov. 9.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

Safety, Pageantry, and History of the Cadet Battery

By Eric Moore

Few things on post are as powerful as hearing the roar of the Cadet Battery, a group of guns fired by a team of cadets of the same name.

The Cadet Battery has existed since 1848, except for a small period between the end of the Civil War and 1875, making it the oldest operating organization at VMI beyond the Corps itself.

“The original Cadet Battery consisted of six guns made especially for VMI in 1848, four 6-pounders (the “Four Gospels”) and two 12-pounders,” Charles Telford ’22 explained.

“The equipment has evolved quite a bit, but the original guns can still be seen on post in front of Old Barracks.”

Today, the Cadet Battery guns do not participate in real fire drills or tactics. Instead, they are used for retreat firings at the end of the day to salute the colors, in salute parades, and to support Breakout.

The guns the Battery fires today are M2A1 (later M101A1) 105mm howitzers. There are



Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85 takes time to chat with the Cadet Battery and Sgt. Maj. William Sowers after the Founders Day parade Nov. 11.—VMI Photo H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

five of them: four named after the original Cadet Battery guns (Matthew II, Mark II, Luke II, and John II), and the Evening Gun, nicknamed Paul.

The Cadet Battery takes training and safety incredibly seriously. Each cadet who is part of the crew is trained to take apart, clean, and reassemble the cannons, and they are also taught crew positions and operations.

Those in the Lexington community may have noticed that the Evening Gun, typically shot everyday except Sunday during the academic year, has been quiet. This has been due to the nationwide shortage of ammunition. Cadet leadership and commandant staff hope supplies are available soon to bring back that daily sound that can be heard for miles.

Fortunately, ammunition was secured for

Founders Day, and the Cadet Battery was very excited to fire the guns again for the occasion.

The Cadet Battery is proud to perform their duties and uphold the history and tradition of the Battery. Pulling the cord to fire the guns never gets old for the cadets.

“Firing the big gun is a very satisfying and exhilarating experience,” Mason shared. “It is something that you will never get bored of and is always worth doing when the chance comes up,” said Albertson. ❁



Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85 poses with the Cadet Battery and Sgt. Maj. William Sowers after the Founders Day parade.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

Leadership Conference Focuses on Citizen-Leaders

By Maj. Michelle Ellwood

The 12th annual VMI Leadership and Ethics Conference, “Evolving Civic Leadership: Citizenship and Social Responsibility,” held Monday, Nov. 1, and Tuesday, Nov. 2, in Marshall Hall, brought more than 160 participants including students of several universities from across the nation to the table to talk about current hot-button topics and hear from inspirational speakers. Participants learned how important active citizen leadership is to the health of our American republic. Central to the conference’s programming were small group discussions and speakers focusing on the aspirational notion of active citizenship

and social responsibility, beginning with our national founding documents, the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution. The conference programming advocated that the individuals in our audience are each citizen leaders with the potential to create change on the smallest to largest levels.

Registrants included VMI cadets, students from other senior military colleges as well as traditional colleges, VMI alumni, and other interested individuals. Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins ’85 welcomed attendees on Monday morning and emphasized how nice it is to be back to a face-to-face conference

after pivoting to a virtual platform during coronavirus pandemic restrictions last academic year. This year’s conference was purposefully designed to reinforce and support both the “One Corps—One VMI: A Unifying Action Plan” and the Inclusive Excellence Plan.

“VMI is an exceptional place to have this conversation and glean insights into active citizenship and civic leadership,” Wins said.

The first guest speaker the audience heard from was Amy Chua,



Leadership Conference participants perform a skit acting out a civil debate on a controversial topic in the Hall of Valor Nov. 2.—VMI Photo by Malia Mantz '23.

Continued on next page

a Yale law professor and author of the book, “Political Tribes: Group Instinct and the Fate of Nations.” She is a daughter of two immigrants and used her time during the conference to dive into why the United States is so “bitterly divided,” and how the future leaders of America in the audience might overcome this.

“Partisanship has become toxic,” she said as she kicked off her talk. Research shows that humans, even as small children, like to be part of groups and are driven to defend their groups. The problem is when tribalism takes over political systems because it becomes the lens through which everything counts, where facts and policies don’t matter.

See Leadership Conference, page 10

Only Living Operation Iraqi Freedom Medal of Honor Recipient Brings Message to VMI

Retired Army Staff Sgt. David Bellavia brought inspirational words on the value of service above self on the afternoon of Tuesday, Nov. 2 in Gillis Theater in Marshall Hall at Virginia Military Institute. His talk, which was open to the public, concluded VMI’s 12th Annual Leadership and Ethics Conference. Bellavia is VMI’s 2021 H. B. Johnson Jr. ’26 Distinguished Lecture Series speaker.

Bellavia, the first and only living Iraqi Freedom veteran to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor, brought humor in his remarks while hitting home on a few key points referring to peer pressure, defending one’s tribe, and not being afraid of failure.



Retired Staff Sgt. David Bellavia speaks with Col. Adrian T. Bogart III ’81, commandant of cadets, during a tour of barracks Nov. 2.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

After recognizing those in the room who had or plan to serve in the various branches of the U.S. military, he thanked Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins ’85, superintendent, for having him on post. Throughout the afternoon, he reminded the audience of the hard work, dedication, and discipline that Wins has displayed to earn the rank of a two-star general.

Bellavia talked about a pandemic in our country, but it was not the one people expected. “It’s contagious. It’s deadly... It’s not COVID, it’s stupid!”

He reminded the cadets in the room that VMI is selective and that they each possess greatness. “VMI doesn’t just take anyone. You had to be something to be here. ...There is greatness inside of you. Your job in this world is to avoid stupid at all costs.”

For anyone who goes on to serve in the military, Bellavia says it’s OK to be afraid, to be wrong, and to fail. Indecision can be deadly. “You will never accomplish anything in life unless you make yourself awkward and uncomfortable every day.”

Being dedicated to the team is critical, and things like religion, gender, sexual orientation, or political affiliation don’t matter. He explained that all that matters is the answer to the question: “Are you going to stand by my side? Yes or no?”

Accountability, loyalty, and consistency are critical character traits required while serving in the military, but also in the civilian world. It is important to lead by example for what it means to be a good citizen and a



Retired Staff Sgt. David Bellavia tours post with cadets during his visit Nov. 2.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

good American. Bellavia was passionate in the way he talks about our country and the loyalty he has to each American, whether born here or not. He noted that we have obligations as Americans to protect and defend one another.

“Everyone’s tribal. Everyone’s divided. [America] is the biggest tribe. We look different. We love different. We worship different. This is a tribe. You can’t touch this tribe. You are part of my family. I’m a part of your legacy. We are one. And when we get into situations that are rough, we defend our family.”

Being open and understanding, treating people with dignity and respect, and showing up are part of setting the standard. “We fight because we love... we have been fighting for love since 1776.”

He wrapped up his talk by going back to his message about having greatness. “When the world hits you with negativity... nothing gets in the way of your greatness!”

Bellavia told the young generation in the room to avoid peer pressure and not to go out looking for validation. “Everyone’s watching you. ...You want people to see your dinner, you want them to see your selfie, you want validation from the crowd? My officers don’t get validation from the crowd. ...Officers stand in the front to command respect because you are the same man and woman that you are outside of formation inside the barracks room.”

Bellavia, who enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1999, was awarded the Medal of Honor for heroic efforts on Nov. 10, 2004, during the Battle of Fallujah, that saved the lives of his unit

members. He served in three military campaigns: Kosovo 2003, Operation Iraqi Freedom I, and Operation Iraqi Freedom II.

In 2006 and 2008, Bellavia returned to Iraq as an embedded reporter covering heavy fighting. He wrote a book about those experiences in 2007 titled “House to House.” His book is considered one of the best first-hand military accounts ever written. Copies of the book were sold during the Leadership Conference, and attendees had a chance to meet Bellavia and get their book signed. He later had an office call with Wins, and toured post with cadets, which included a visit to barracks with Col. Adrian T. Bogart ’81, commandant.

— Maj. Michelle Ellwood



Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins ’85, superintendent, shakes hands with retired Staff Sgt. David Bellavia Nov. 2.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

Chua says several factors are causing the divisions: massive demographic transformation, social media, and the rise of the divide in America between coastal elites and the middle Americans or working class.

She recognizes what makes America special is how we can move forward in reunifying efforts. She and the other speakers pointed out that America's unique bond comes from

a commitment to a certain creed, ideas, and words; particularly those in our country's founding documents rather than race, religion, or ethnicity. For this reason, every member of the audience was given a pocket U.S. Constitution.

Later in the morning, John Wood Jr., national ambassador for Braver Angels, an organization dedicated to helping Americans overcome political polarization, spoke to attendees, whom he greeted as his "fellow Americans." He mentioned that this term is used so freely, especially in political environments.

Wood, who is biracial, explained the vastly different backgrounds of his parents who each showed him "different narratives of American existence," providing him a wealth of views and perspectives from different branches of his family.

Wood's wife is a military veteran. In speaking to an audience, a majority of whom are exploring military futures, he said, "The institution of the United States military, at its best, provides a framework in which we can harness the deeper sorts of values and commitments that we share as Americans, extending beyond the differences in our identity in a way that gives us common cause and a common mission, and



Lt. Col. Jamica Love, chief diversity officer, engages with Katie Lloyd '23 during a networking portion of the Leadership Conference in Marshall Hall.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

allows us to transcend the things that are so bitterly dividing the American people at this moment."

He asked the audience members to re-evaluate what they each can offer American society. The missions don't always go as expected, but that doesn't mean anyone should lose confidence, integrity, or moral character. "The best argument is done by example."

With Braver Angels' facilitators on-site to guide them, participants in the Leadership Conference then debated cadet-selected controversial topics. The topics included COVID-19 vaccine mandates, the U.S. military intervening in foreign countries, transgender athletes, and social media content regulations. The four

breakout groups found creative ways to report out their groups' findings during the conference, some using video, while others created skits, to show the different ways debates can be handled civilly and educationally.

The first day ended with dinner speaker, Eric Liu, founder of Citizen University, whose mission is to build a culture of powerful, responsible citizenship in cities across the country. Liu, like the other speakers, confirmed we are in a culture where people have many different viewpoints and political perspectives and asked "How, as a nation, do we close the gap between our creed and our deeds?"

Citizenship is something that must be cultivated, and we must take personal responsibility when we want to see change or leadership. According to Liu, citizenship happens when we are fluent in the proper use of power and develop our collective civic character to organize and engage.

"We own responsibility for the good, the bad, and ugly, the past, the present, and the future," Liu said.

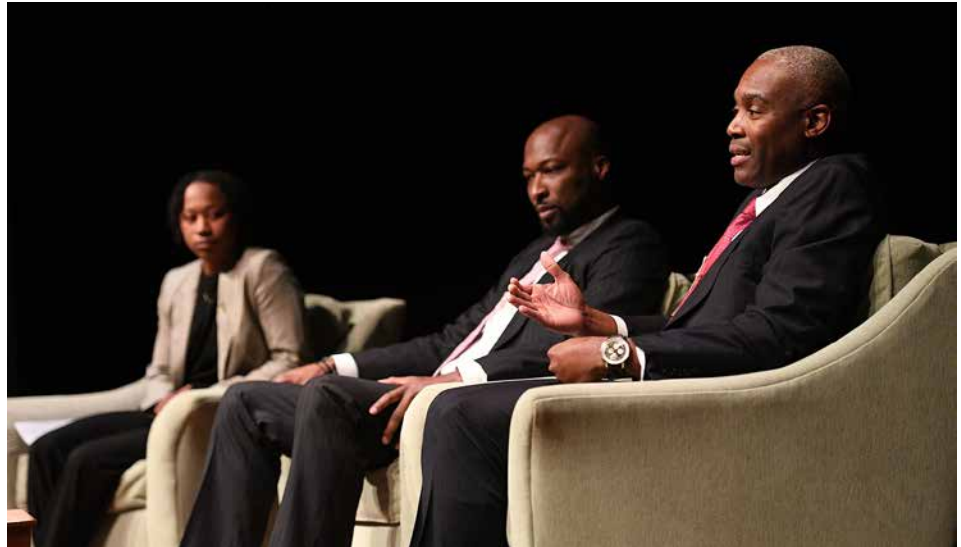
Continued on next page



John Wood Jr. speaks in Gillis Theater during the 12th annual VMI Leadership Conference Nov. 1.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

On the second day of the conference, William McNulty, a Marine veteran and founder of Team Rubicon, a group that trains veterans to respond to natural disasters spoke to the crowd. Team Rubicon came about from a group of eight individuals who used their military experience to organize and respond to the 2010 earthquake in Haiti in just 24 hours. Now Team Rubicon Global has more than 100,000 members with units in Australia, Canada, Norway, and the United Kingdom, in addition to the United States. About 75% of those involved in Team Rubicon are veterans. The organization has garnered support from four U.S. presidents and members have even worked side-by-side with Prince Harry.

McNulty learned valuable lessons along the way which helped him, and his team focus their company's mission and operations toward more internal objectives which help veterans, such as providing a sense of purpose, a sense of community, and a sense of identity. McNulty helped the audience understand the high of responding to crisis events and how continual exposure to such working environments can trigger a kind of addiction response that can be dangerous, as was the case with a friend whom they met on their first mission, a veteran named Clay. Clay discovered Team Rubicon online and sought them out during their efforts in Haiti. Noted McNulty, "Daily, 22 veterans commit suicide. In 2011, Clay was



Sean Lanier '94 compares thoughts and experiences with panel participants Lester Johnson '95 and Keniya Lee '19 in Gillis Theater Nov. 2.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

one of them." McNulty said Clay taught him that "friends don't let friends go through terrible things alone." McNulty went on to say, "Clay's message is to show up for one another. Find a purpose you'd navigate an earthquake for."

His remarks were followed by a panel discussion featuring alumni who demonstrated civic engagement in action. The group, along with others, initiated collaborative efforts to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion at VMI. Moderating the panel was Lt. Col. Jamica Love, the Institute's chief diversity officer. Lester Johnson '95, Sean

Lanier '94, and Keniya Lee '19 talked about what it means to be involved with the Institute after graduation, what it was like reading about VMI in the news so much in the last year, and how important it is to have empathy during cadetship and afterward. Speaking on his own behalf, Johnson,

who is a member of VMI's Board of Visitors like Lanier, said that, as a society, we "need to expand our ability to have empathy."

The conference's final speaker was Staff Sgt. David Bellavia, the only living Medal of Honor recipient from Operation Iraqi Freedom. Bellavia brought humor and passion to his remarks and encouraged cadets and other audience members not to be afraid of failure, or of being awkward and uncomfortable. Gillis Theater was nearly full, with his speech open to the public, as he emphasized knowing one's own personal identity and purpose. "If you know who you are, no one can take that away from you—no matter what they say to you or about you, because no one can take away from you what you are." Accountability, consistency, love, and loyalty were the values he emphasized.

Col. Dave Gray, director for VMI's Center for Leadership and Ethics, felt proud of this year's conference and his team's efforts. "Each speaker and each interactive activity we designed into this conference brought depth and a variety of perspectives on how to view what it means to be a citizen-leader," he said. "The feedback we received from the conference participants has been very positive. We hope that they will continue to discuss and reflect on this conference for quite some time to come."

Next year's Leadership Conference will be held on Oct. 30–Nov. 1, 2022 with an announcement of the theme and title coming in the spring. To stay informed, visit the conference website and join the mailing list at conferences.vmi.edu/leadership. 🌟



William McNulty speaks at the 12th annual Leadership Conference Nov. 2 about the disaster response efforts of Team Rubicon.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

POST BRIEFS

Jones' Dissertation Wins Multiple Awards

Maj. Jonathan Jones, assistant professor of history, was presented the inaugural Chancellor Distinguished Ph.D. Graduate Dissertation Award in early November in Albany, New York. This recognition was given to one Ph.D. dissertation defended in 2020 at one of SUNY's (State University of New York) 11 doctorate granting campuses, including his alma mater Binghamton University, and carries a cash prize and additional professional development opportunities from SUNY. Jones' dissertation, "Opium

Slavery: Veterans and Addiction in the American Civil War Era," was the only one focused on humanities to advance to the finalist pool in the very STEM-heavy field. Days after being presented that award, Jones learned his dissertation also received the 2021 Anne Bailey Dissertation Prize of the Society of Civil War Historians for best dissertation in Civil War History during the past calendar year.

Mallari Presents at Computer Science Conference

Tanner Mallari '22, a computer and information sciences major, presented at the Association for Computing Machinery International Conference on Computer Science and Software Engineering in October. The research presented was a result of collaboration between Mallari, Emily Hattman '22, and Dr. Youna Jung, associate professor of computer and information sciences. Their research explores the effectiveness and security of disaster-responsive software. Since a lack of standardization and unqualified applications could lead to dangerous situations, the team proposed a

certificate that proves the effectiveness, security, and compliance of a disaster response mobile application.

Mallari believes their research could provide added safety and effectiveness in a disaster situation. "I am most proud that our work can have a positive impact on people who experience hardship and lack guidance during disaster, especially in a world with so much computing power that could help them," Mallari said.

Faculty and Cadets Participate in SAMLA Conference

Three faculty members from the Department of English, Rhetoric, and Humanistic Studies, Col. Christina McDonald, Col. Emily Miller, and Lt. Col. Polly Atwell, presented papers in a session titled "Women, Language, and Community: Texts and Contexts in the Humanities Classroom" at the South Atlantic Modern Language Association (SAMLA) 2021 conference. Cadets who took Miller's Institute Honors seminar, "Shakespeare: Power

and Politics," last year also presented research papers on Shakespeare and early modern culture in Undergraduate Research Forums. Cadets enrolled in the seminar this semester attended the sessions and posed questions to the panelists. SAMLA was founded in 1928 and is dedicated to literary and linguistic advancement in education. McDonald is the organization's 2021–22 president. ✪

Founders Day *continued from page 1*

up their cadetship. This is the first time since 1988 that two brothers received the award on the same day.

Zarges says this award "is presented so rarely because it is reserved for alumni and friends whose lives have been characterized by significant professional achievement, selfless service to their professions and their communities, and an unshakable devotion to the Institute."

One of the country's most distinguished public historians, Bryan is the former president



Kasey Meredith '22, regimental commander, brings the color guard forward for the National Anthem during the Founders Day parade Nov. 11.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

and chief executive officer of the Virginia Historical Society (VHS), a post he held from 1988 to 2008. After retiring from the VHS, Bryan was a founding partner of Bryan & Jordan Consulting, LLC, which specializes in strategic planning, fundraising, board and staff relations, and executive searches for nonprofit institutions and higher

Continued on next page



Thomas Zarges '70 and Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85 pose with William Paulette '69 and Charles Bryan '69 after presenting them each with the Distinguished Service Award.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

education. A leader in service in his field, Bryan was on the board of the National Museum of American History, served as the president of the American Association for State and Local History and the Independent Research Libraries Association. He is a lecturer for the Organization of American Historians' Distinguished Lecture Series and was named by the Virginia General Assembly as the Outstanding Virginian of 2009. He has served VMI faithfully including eight years as a trustee of the VMI Foundation and has been instrumental in the recent restructuring of the VMI Alumni Agencies. A history major, Bryan was a Distinguished Military Student and a member of the Bomb staff.

Paulette is the chairman and chief executive officer of KBS, a construction firm he founded in 1975. During the past 46 years under his leadership, the company has become one of the top-rated construction firms in the Mid-Atlantic area. KBS constructed the VMI facility that houses locker rooms for baseball, men's and women's soccer, and lacrosse, which was dedicated as Paulette Hall



Charles Bryan '69 and William Paulette '69 take review with Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85 during the Founders Day parade Nov. 11.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.



The Cadet Battery finishes firing the howitzers during the Founders Day parade Nov. 11.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

in 2007. He was a member of the governing board of the VMI Keydet Club, which is dedicated to raising support for VMI's intercollegiate sports program and its cadet-athletes, from 1997 to 2002 and again from 2010 to 2019. He was the Keydet Club's president from 2011 to 2016 and, in that role, was an ex-officio member of the governing boards of the VMI Alumni Association and the VMI Foundation. He was appointed to VMI's Board of Visitors in 2002 and served in that role until 2010. He was the board's vice president and chairman of the athletic and external affairs committees. In 2017, the VMI Keydet Club recognized his service to VMI athletics with the Spirit of VMI Award. Paulette also served on the board of the Virginia State Board for Contractors and Make-A-Wish Greater Virginia and was the chairman of the Henrico County Community Services Board. A civil engineering major, Paulette was a two-sport athlete, competing in both football and baseball.

Bryan and Paulette joined Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, superintendent, to take review of the Founders Day parade held in the afternoon. The Cadet Battery fired a rousing salute with the howitzers to honor the occasion. ✪



The Cadet Battery fires the howitzers during the Founders Day parade Nov. 11.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

Full-Scale Ring Figure Returns

By Maj. Michelle Ellwood

In the final days before Thanksgiving furlough, the Class of 2023 celebrated Ring Figure Nov. 18 and 19. Things seemed mostly back to normal after last year's Ring Figure was missing some key elements of the celebration like the Ring Figure ball, due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"The five-venue, two-day event takes an entire year to plan, document, and execute. Having the opportunity to put it on full-scale again was fantastic," said Command Sgt. Maj. Suzanne Rubenstein, director of activities for the commandant's office.

Cameron Cavanaugh '23, class president agreed. "We were so blessed to have been able to come back to living and breathing

VMI this year. ...The pressure was on because this Ring Figure would 'reset the precedent' for Ring Figures to come," he said.

The traditional presentation of the combat rings in Memorial Hall and class supper in Crozet Hall were held Thursday, Nov. 18. Cavanaugh, in a nearly unanimous vote, received this year's Douglas Carter France III '71 Memorial Award for "excellent character, selflessness, graciousness, and enthusiasm."

Lt. Col. Tom DiTomasso addressed the class during the supper. He is a graduate of Norwich University and served in the U.S. Army for 20 years. His military decorations include the Silver Star, the Purple Heart, two Legions of Merit, three Bronze Stars, the Combat Infantryman's Badge with Star, and the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal with Arrowhead.

Rubenstein was surprised to get her own ring that night, being the honorary Brother Rat for the Class of 2023. She is often compared to Pixar's character Mrs. Incredible, thriving under pressure. She's had an action figure of the character on her desk for more than ten years, and it helps keep her motivated. She said, "The Class of 2023 took time to make me part of their tight-knit family, and I am forever humbled and grateful to



Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85 shakes hands with Justin Addis '23 before handing him his ring.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

even be considered an honorary BR. I will treasure this memory forever!"

Cadets received their individualized rings in a ceremony in Cameron Hall Friday, Nov. 19, with remarks provided by Jamie Clark '84, who serves as a senior policy advisor to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Infrastructure Security and Energy Restoration Division. Clark is the father of Jamison Clark '23, who was tragically killed in an accident in November 2019. After reminding the cadets to stay true to themselves, Jamie was presented a Class of 2023 ring in memory of Jamison. The ring was sized specifically for Jamison's twin sister's hand. A seat on the floor of Cameron Hall sat empty except for a single brick—a brick

Continued on next page



Malia Mantz '23 and her date pose for a photo inside the ring on the Gillis Theater stage during the Ring Figure ball Nov. 19.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



Cody Talbert '23 and his date dance in the Hall of Valor during the Ring Figure ball Nov. 19.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



Command Sgt. Maj. Suzanne Rubenstein is surprised with a ring from the Class of 2023 in Crozet Hall Nov. 18.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



The Class of 2023 form the figure two and the figure three on the floor of Cameron Hall after receiving their rings Nov. 19.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

that has been carried to every momentous occasion of the Class of 2023 and serves as a symbol of Jamison's continued presence throughout their cadetship.

"Jamison is forever our Brother Rat, and his legacy of heart, determination, and laughter will forever live with the Class

of 2023," said Cavanaugh, one of Jamison's roommates their rat year.

Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, superintendent, presented cadets with their rings during the ceremony, and cadets and their families then joined in Memorial Hall for a ring blessing. Loved ones were thrilled to

be in attendance, as last year's pandemic restrictions only allowed two guests per cadet.

The evening wrapped up with the Ring Figure ball held in Marshall Hall with the traditional white gowns and gloves, the processions through sabers and the giant ring, and dancing. ❄️



A brick in memory of Jamison Clark '23 is placed in a seat during the Ring Figure Presentation in Cameron Hall.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



Cadets sing "The VMI Spirit" in Cameron Hall after receiving their rings Nov. 19.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



Logan Poff '23 and Clarabelle Walkup '23 enter Marshall Hall through a cadet cordon.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



Jamie Clark '84 addresses the Class of 2023 in Cameron Hall Nov. 19.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



Virginia Military Institute
Communications & Marketing Office
Lexington, VA 24450-0304

Nonprofit Org
US Postage
PAID
Waynesboro, VA
Permit 129

Trick-Or-Treat in Barracks

On the Friday evening before Halloween, cadets handed out candy to trick-or-treaters. The event, with a "Wizard of Oz" theme, was open to families of VMI faculty and staff, and cadets spent the previous week decorating barracks for the guests. –
VMI Photos by Kelly Nye.



Connect with VMI

 facebook.com/vmi1839

 [@vmi1839](https://twitter.com/vmi1839)

 [@virginia_military_institute](https://instagram.com/virginia_military_institute)

 vminews.tumblr.com

Additional photos and videos can be found on Flickr and YouTube.