



INSTITUTE REPORT

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Miller Named VMI Athletic Director

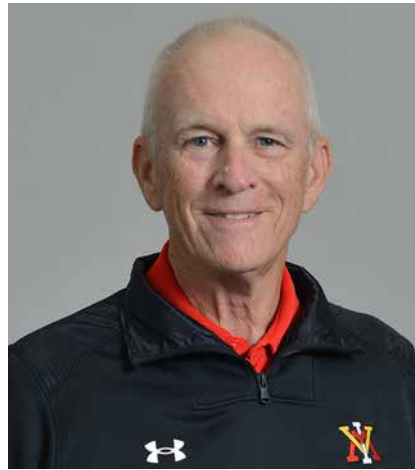
By Maj. Michelle Ellwood

Jim Miller was appointed to serve as VMI's director of intercollegiate athletics over the summer. Miller was interim athletic director since Oct. 1, 2021, and had been working closely with Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, superintendent, on an assessment of the athletic experience in conjunction with the superintendent's "One Corps—One VMI: A Unifying Action Plan."

"Jim's leadership has been on display since his arrival in October, and I'm pleased that he is staying," said Wins. "Our coaches, cadet-athletes, and programs will advance through his ideas and experiences."

Miller retired in 2014 from the University of Richmond and has more than 30 years of experience working in NCAA athletics, including a stint as an assistant basketball coach at VMI (1979–1982).

During his 12 years as athletic director at the University of Richmond, the Spiders won a Football Championship Subdivision



Jim Miller

(FCS) national championship in football, had three NCAA tournament appearances in men's basketball including a trip to the Sweet 16, and captured 44 conference titles among 12 sports. Miller was also associate athletic director at North Carolina State University. During his college days, he played basketball and baseball at Old Dominion University. He has been an advocate for student-athletes, an effective fundraiser, and a strong proponent of the fan experience.

"I am grateful and excited for the opportunity to continue at VMI," Miller said. "I look forward to partnering with Major General Wins, our coaches,

cadet-athletes, athletics staff, and the VMI community to accept the challenge of competing to win." ❁



Movie Night in Foster Stadium

VMI hosted a movie night in Foster Stadium on Friday, Aug. 19, the evening before matriculation. The event was open to the entire community with families of matriculants, cadets, faculty, and staff also attending. "D2: The Mighty Ducks" was played on the video-board that was installed in October 2021. The concession stand offered drinks, popcorn, and other snacks.—VMI Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



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International Travel Makes a Comeback

By Marianne Hause

Studying abroad for cadets came back to life in a robust way over the summer, after a two-year interruption due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. Several groups journeyed to extraordinary places around the globe, met remarkable people, and experienced amazing events during these life-changing trips.

Wherever in the world VMI cadets travel, they make an impact. So it was during a 16-day trip to Israel for eight cadets and two staff members, Col. David R. Gray, director of the Center for Leadership & Ethics, and Institute and Corps Sgt. Maj. Tom Sowers.

The tour of the country was arranged through The MirYam Institute, a U.S. based, 501(c)(3), non-profit. MirYam's program, I-SAP (Israel Strategy & Policy) tour is designed for U.S. military cadets to travel throughout the country, learn about Israel, its place among the nations, and its relationship with the United States. During their visit, VMI cadets, as well as cadets from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, the U.S. Air Force Academy, and the Royal Military College Saint-Jean in Canada,



Cassidy Dufour '23 rides a camel by the Dead Sea outside Jericho. —Photo courtesy of Cassidy Dufour '23.

were briefed by elected officials, generals, ambassadors, media analysts, jurists, and ministers.

"VMI's objective was to get our cadets to network and befriend cadets from other

military academies to build long-term relationships," said Gray. "We accomplished that goal since the cadets traveled together and roomed with different people in each of the many places we stayed throughout the country."

The VMI cadets, along with the cadets from the other academies, participated in a debate during their tour. Four debate teams were assigned the task to defend an option involving how Israel should deal with the Palestinians, a question that world leaders have argued for decades. Each team researched the topic and offered a ten-minute presentation. The VMI team won the debate, based on their ability to sway the judges' opinions.

The group visited The Knesset, Israel's legislative body and met with seven legislators. They spoke with former prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, as well as a supreme court justice, and the former head of the Mossad, the national intelligence agency of Israel.

Sowers was captivated with Israel. "There are so many parts of the trip I enjoyed, that could be considered my favorite part," said Sowers. "Listening to Netanyahu speak

ranks at the top. As a Christian, walking Jesus' path to the cross and visiting where he was crucified, where he performed the miracle of two fish and five loaves of bread, and where he walked on the Sea of Galilee ranks high too. But truthfully, the most impactful was touring the Yad Vashem Holocaust



Cadets, along with Col. Dave Gray and Sgt. Maj. Tom Sowers pose at the Mount of Olives, outside the Old City of Jerusalem, during their 16-day trip. —Photo courtesy of Sgt. Maj. Tom Sowers.

Continued on next page

Museum and listening to one of the last few survivors of the Holocaust. Seeing 'man's inhumanity to man' and listening to the survivor's testimony was very sobering. It was a horrifying reminder of how cruel mankind can be; what can happen if good people stand by and allow evil to happen."

Patrick Simmons '25 said it was life changing. "I study history in my free time and know a lot about Israel and Jerusalem. Visiting these places I have read about was absolutely mind blowing," said Simmons.

"Israel is a paradise in the desert and reminds me of California. It is like a green jewel in the desert. The Israeli people are extremely friendly and love talking to Americans, which made me feel at home in a foreign country." Simmons noted that there are many places that fly the American flag alongside the Israeli flag.

"This trip was a graduate-level experience for our cadets," said Gray, "We saw so many magnificent achievements of the Israelis. They are our friends; we share Western values, and they are the only democracy in the Middle East. I'd like VMI to participate in the program again. It is a great opportunity."

Adventures were happening elsewhere as the inaugural Math Summer Study Abroad Program in Italy took place from mid-June through mid-July. Three applied mathematics faculty members and 13 cadets lived, ate, and conducted classes in a converted 14th century monastery in the small walled city of Castiglion Fiorentino in eastern Tuscany. As the focus of the program centered on mathematics in Italy, the group traveled to Rome, Pisa, and Florence to visit important sites and learn about Italian mathematicians and scientists such as Galileo, da Vinci, Fibonacci, Cardano, Tartaglia, and Brunelleschi. The group also traveled to Venice, Milan and Cinque Terre.

"The cadets forged friendships with their Italian peers that will last a lifetime," said Col. Troy Siemers, department head of applied mathematics and program director. "One amazing part of the trip was each week one-third of the cadets made dinner

for the whole group, creating a menu, and explaining the history of the recipes. They spent hours preparing, experimenting, cooking, and laughing. The delicious food they made was truly a highlight of the trip," Siemers continued.

The Math Summer Study Abroad Program in Italy will continue next summer. The program is available for any cadet as well as current students in good standing with an accredited university.

Antonio Ahanj '24, an international studies major, has not let anything slow him



Antonio Ahanj '24 rides a horse on the beach of Tangier, Morocco.—Photo courtesy of Antonio Ahanj '24.

down in his quest for adventure and learning, as he spent the summer studying Arabic in Tangier, Morocco, after winning a highly competitive scholarship. The program, called Critical Language Scholarship (CLS), is funded by the U. S. State Department, and open to all civilians.

Ahanj, the first VMI cadet accepted into the program, underwent several rounds of vigorous interviews and vetting when he applied for the scholarship. In addition to grades, transcripts, and recommendations, applicants were judged on how they

responded to four short essay questions, each not exceeding 300 words.

The group of scholars with whom Ahanj studied Arabic in Morocco included many pursuing advanced degrees from Ivy League universities and a 2022 graduate from Washington & Lee University. He was one of only five students who are still in an undergraduate program. Classes lasted four hours each day: two hours of grammar, one hour of conversation over a wide variety of topics, then one hour of Derija, the dialect of Arabic spoken in Morocco. In addition to classroom learning, each member was assigned a language partner, a Moroccan student who spent at least three hours per week tutoring them and teaching them about Moroccan culture.

A challenge Ahanj enjoys when learning a new language is being placed in situations where he is woefully ill-equipped, but must persevere. One such situation was when he was on the beach of Tangier, where men walk around with horses and camels and offer 30-minute rides for 50 dirhams (\$5). Despite having never ridden a horse, Ahanj paid the man and climbed on the horse. Though his Arabic and Spanish vocabularies are extensive, he knew no terms about horseback riding, and the owner of the horse knew no English. "The horse was magnificent, but the directions the man gave me for making the horse move and stop were in the form of hand gestures. As a result, I did what I had seen Clint Eastwood do in the spaghetti western movies, I kicked the side of the horse, held on for dear life and shot off into the Moroccan sunset," quipped Ahanj.

Ahanj will spend the fall semester in Spain to pursue a higher level of language proficiency. It is his goal to graduate from VMI in 2024 with proficiency in three foreign languages: Arabic, Farsi, and Spanish.

Ahanj is from Nolensville, Tennessee. Upon graduating from VMI, he hopes to work for the U.S. State Department in the foreign service office.

For more information on the study abroad program, go to www.vmi.edu/study-abroad. ❄

SURI Projects Cover Plethora of Topics

By Marianne Hause

Summer is ordinarily the time of year when most college students go home to spend time with family and friends, travel, and relax. But for some cadets, who don't do ordinary, summer was an opportunity to remain on post, and conduct research through the Summer Undergraduate Research Institute (SURI) program. The scope of the projects varied widely by topic and fields of study, and all demanded extensive research requiring time, work and sacrifice. Results of the projects not only benefit VMI but have the potential of making a global impact. Highlighted here are a few.

Growing Crops with Hydroponics

Anne C. Townsend '24, a civil and environmental engineering major, researched ways to grow vegetables cheaply and using minimal space, for dining services on a college campus, specifically for use in growing lettuce at VMI, in her project titled, "A Study in Hydroponics: Comparing Vertical and Horizontal Nutrient Film Technique Systems for Maximum Yield and Feasibility."



Anne Townsend '24 demonstrates how her vertical hydroponics systems work to grow lettuce for VMI.—VMI Photo by Marianne Hause.

Hydroponics is a one-crop oriented system, cycling nutrient-enhanced water through a series of pipes for the growth of plants. Townsend, who grew up on a small farm in Crozier, Virginia, where her family works to produce their own food, pointed out that agricultural practices need to adapt for several reasons: due to pollution and land overuse in the last 40 years, one-third of the world's cultivatable land has been lost; small family farms have largely faded into history, being taken over by massive, large-scale mechanized farms that use high-tech equipment; and the growth of the human population.

Townsend's advisors, Dr. Tanjina Afrin and Maj. Rebekah Martin, both assistant professors in civil and environmental engineering, praised her hard work, long-term vision, and self-motivation.

Townsend plans to pursue a master's degree in architecture after graduating from VMI. She is interested in incorporating hydroponics in architectural designs to help feed future populations.

Element Synthesis

Owen Ahrens '24, a biology major with a minor in chemistry, researched the synthesis and reactivity of cobalt-centered molecules in his SURI project titled, "Synthesis and Utilization of Alkyl Cobaloxime Complexes in Cycloaddition Reactions."

Medicines can be extremely expensive because the natural sources that produce the compounds to make them are not sufficient to meet the demand. As a result, chemists have researched ways to develop compounds synthetically in order to improve their availability and make them more economical.

Cobalt, an element found in the Earth's crust, has the potential to be extremely functional in chemical methodology. It is most commonly used in batteries, aircraft engine parts, dyes, and in the treatment of cancer. "I want to stretch the limits on how to use cobalt," said Ahrens. "There is a cobalt complex that mimics vitamin B-12. I believe we can go much farther with other cobalt complexes."

Ahrens' advisor on the project, Maj. Kaitlyn Cartwright, assistant professor in chemistry, said "Owen is building molecules like microscopic architecture. Each different scaffold is like a different floor plan for a house, and different floor plans are optimal for different purposes. His project right now is building a type of scaffold, and systematically modifying one component on the structure to see how it influences the function of the scaffold."

Ahrens, who is from Lynchburg, Virginia, is a VMI legacy. His father, David Ahrens '91 encouraged his children to attend VMI. Ahrens younger brother Noah is a member of the Class of 2025. Upon graduating from VMI, Ahrens plans to go to physician's associate school.

Intelligence Failures and Successes

Katie Lloyd '23, an international studies major, researched past military intelligence failures and successes to prevent future failures and to increase successes, in her SURI project titled, "Toward a Typology of U.S. Intelligence Successes and Failures."

Continued on next page

Lloyd became interested in the topic when she took a course called “U.S. Intelligence Successes and Failures” taught by Dr. Paul D. Humphries. The course covered five in-depth case studies from Pearl Harbor to the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The cadets taking the class researched and presented additional case studies, which the class examined factors that contributed to intelligence success or failure. According to Humphries, who served as her advisor on the project, Lloyd was one of the more eager and involved students in the class.

Lloyd took what she learned in the course, the case studies she and her classmates explored, investigations into other applicable historical episodes, and considerable extra reading to see if, through this research and her own analysis, she could come up with identifiable patterns of practical shortcomings that can explain and identify what factors cause intelligence efforts to fail and why. She hopes her work will assist with directing, conducting, and evaluating intelligence activities to avoid potential pitfalls.



Owen Ahrens '24 conducts research on the synthesis and reactivity of cobalt-centered molecules in the lab in Maury-Brooke Hall. –VMI Photo by Marianne Hause.

Lloyd is from Caroline County, Virginia. Upon graduating from VMI, she hopes to work in geospatial intelligence, the exploitation and analysis of imagery and geospatial information to describe, assess, and visually depict physical features and geographically referenced activities on the Earth.



Katie Lloyd '23 visits the library to gather research on intelligence for her SURI project. –VMI Photo by Marianne Hause.

Stress in Rats

Noah Campbell '24, a biology major researched stress in rats in his SURI project titled, “The Effects of Environment on Corticosterone Production in *Rattus Norvegicus*.”

Campbell’s research, in partnership with the University of Richmond (UR) in Richmond, Virginia, and in collaboration with other cadet research, explores the relationship between corticosterone and environment in brown rats collected in the local countryside of Rockbridge County. Corticosterone levels in the rats were measured from fecal and blood samples. Organs involved in immune response, such

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Scott Named First Female Commander of ROTC Detachment

By Marianne Hause

Col. Nichole K.A. Scott assumed command of the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps (AFROTC) at VMI this summer. Scott is the first female commander of any ROTC military branch at VMI.

Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, superintendent, said that he is excited to work with Scott. "Colonel Scott has distinguished herself as an exceptional leader and the perfect fit for VMI. I look forward to seeing Nichole mold our Air Force ROTC cadets into outstanding second lieutenants who will serve our country well," said Wins.

Scott entered the Air Force in July 1998 as a graduate of the ROTC program at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago, Illinois. She is a career civil engineering officer with multiple deployments in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. She has held multiple staff and base level assignments. She also served as a political affairs strategist at the U.S. Pacific Command. She was a deployed squadron commander of the 386th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron, Ali Al Salem Air Base in Kuwait. Her second squadron command was the 375th Civil Engineer Squadron at Scott Air Force Base in Illinois. Prior to coming to VMI, she was the commander of the 316th Mission Support Group at Joint Base Andrews in Maryland.

Born and raised from humble beginnings in Hawaii, Scott enrolled in Junior ROTC in order to attend the high school of her choice. Prior to that exposure, she did not know what ROTC entailed, nor had any military aspirations, but soon embraced it and applied for ROTC and received a full scholarship to Illinois Tech. Even though Chicago was quite different from Hawaii in many ways, not the least of which is the weather, Scott adored it. "I loved the people and the structure of both Illinois Tech and ROTC. It was such a wonderful experience,



Col. Nichole Scott

and I wanted to continue in the military," said Scott.

Scott has been in the Air Force for 24 years and has traveled all over the world, including two tours in her home state of Hawaii, where she still has family, where she was married, and where her two children were born. "I have been so blessed. I enjoy the Air Force and find it amazing that it has been 24 years. The time has flown by," she mused.

Scott applied for the highly sought-after position at VMI having never been to Lexington. She had visited the Shenandoah Valley region though, and found it to be beautiful and charming, and wanted to reside in Virginia. She had talked to graduates of VMI and was aware of VMI's history. "I applied in August 2021 among fierce

competition. I didn't know who else had applied, but I did know they were all extremely qualified, and frankly I didn't think I had much of a chance. The following October, my boss called and told me I got the job. I was elated," explained Scott. Her tour of duty at VMI is for three years.

Scott was not aware of the significance of her appointment being the first female ROTC commander at VMI when she applied, but learned of it later. "I was surprised to learn that I am

the first," she confessed, "But I truly believe that the military is a meritocracy, that people are selected based on skills and merits. I don't shy from a challenge, and come to work every day with the goal of doing the very best I can. My predecessor did an excellent job in producing the best Air and Space Force lieutenants to come out of VMI. I will continue to train and educate our cadets and will model what the Air Force and Space Force look like. I love people and believe my strength is mentoring and guiding young people, and am excited to be able to do that here at VMI," said Scott.

Scott lives with her husband and two children in Lexington and believes in the strength of family. She maintains close connections with her family members in Hawaii, as well as her husband's family here on the mainland. "There is a Hawaiian word, 'ohana' which means family. We can't choose our family, but as members of a family, we help each other out and support each other. We hold our siblings accountable for bad choices, and we cry on each other's shoulders and help carry each other's burdens. That is what family is for. I have been told that VMI is very much a family, and even though I have only been here a short time, I have experienced that sentiment. I want to impress that point of view to my cadets, to hold each other accountable, and to support one another in reaching their goals," said Scott. ✪

Matriculation 2022

Joining an “Embracing Family of Families”

By Marianne Hause

Matriculation Day was held Saturday, Aug. 20, beginning the Rat Line for the new academic year. This year celebrates the 25th anniversary of women at VMI as 53 females signed the matriculation book this year.

Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, superintendent, addressed the approximately 375 matriculants and their families.

“You’ve come to VMI to succeed,” said Wins. “We did not bring you here to fail, and we have every expectation that you can and you will make it through the next few months, and graduate in a few short years.

“Always keep in mind why you chose VMI,” he continued, as he highlighted the “brother rat spirit” and the exciting paths ahead for each individual matriculating.

Also speaking during the ceremony was Col. Adrian T. Bogart III '81, commandant. “This is a very large and embracing family of families,” he said of the VMI community as he welcomed the matriculants and their parents. Through his remarks, he talked about the importance of honor and respect throughout a cadetship, and how these values will carry them through.



Band Company matriculants enter New Barracks Saturday, Aug. 20.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

The incoming cadets said good-bye to their families, formed up with their companies for the first time, and took an oath during the ceremony in Cameron Hall. They then marched up to barracks, where they met their cadre. Within moments, haircuts and training began.

This year’s new cadets come from 31 states and six foreign countries, with 62% from Virginia and 38% from out of state.

More than 120 are recruited NCAA athletes. Fifty-one percent are majoring in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) disciplines and 49% in the liberal arts. Eighty percent plan on commissioning into the military after graduation.

Upper-class cadets returned Sunday, Aug. 28, and classes began Tuesday, Aug. 30. VMI and the VMI Alumni Agencies are highlighting 25 years of women on social media and in upcoming Institute Reports. 🇺🇸

See more photos of Matriculation, [page 10](#)



Mike Vozzo buzz cuts a matriculant’s hair in the barber shop Saturday, Aug. 20.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



Isabelle Cabales '25 oversees the Matriculation Book as Avan Johnson '26 signs it, officially matriculating to VMI.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.



Matriculants arrived on post Saturday, Aug. 20. In the morning they received their room and company assignments and parts of their uniforms. Later that afternoon during a ceremony in Cameron Hall they were called down by company and marched up to barracks where the Rat Line began.—VMI Photos by Marianne Hause, H. Lockwood McLaughlin, and Kelly Nye.





Cadre Week

Cadre returned to post a week prior to matriculation to prepare to lead the incoming Rat Mass. The schedule included uniform inspections, practice for the matriculation ceremony, briefs from leadership, policy reviews, and Blue Book training. Other activities included saber manual, practice parades, and room inspection protocol.

— VMI Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin and Kelly Nye.



POST BRIEFS

Roberts Named Head Baseball Coach

Sam Roberts '11 became the 21st head coach in the VMI baseball program this summer. Roberts spent the 2017 season as a volunteer assistant with the VMI program after retiring from the professional ranks following Spring Training 2016. Roberts was promoted to associate head coach/recruiting coordinator in the fall of 2020 after serving as an assistant coach for four years.

VMI's all-time hits leader, Roberts ranks in the program's top-three in nine career categories, and leads in hits, walks, at-bats, runs scored and games played. He was also a regular on the mound, both in starting and relief roles. Roberts was drafted by Oakland following the 2011 season and spent five seasons in the A's system. Following the 2013 season, Roberts transitioned full-time to the mound and spent his final two professional seasons in that role.

Knepper's Book Published

Lt. Col. Steven E. Knepper, associate professor in the Department of English, Rhetoric, and Humanistic Studies, recently published his first book titled, "Wonder Strikes: Approaching Aesthetics and Literature with William Desmond." It is the first book-length examination of the prominent contemporary philosopher William Desmond's approach to aesthetics, art, and literature.

Knepper first became interested in Desmond's work after reading some of his essays about wonder. He notes that Desmond does not avoid life's problems in his philosophy, but does emphasize the importance of friendship, hope, and helping others. "Wonder Strikes" is published by SUNY Press, a leading publisher of scholarly works in areas of aesthetics and literature. It is available to colleges and universities to use as a scholarly text, and to anyone wanting to learn more about Desmond.

Wins Receives Distinguished Service Award

Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, superintendent, appeared on the cover of The Office Review's July–August issue as he was named the recipient of the 2022 MOWW Distinguished Service Award. The Military Order of the World Wars (MOWW) honored Wins at a ceremony in early August in Jacksonville, Florida during its 102nd National Convention.

The history of the MOWW dates back to 1919. The more than 160 MOWW chapters across the country promote patriotism, good citizenship, and individual responsibility, while offering programs for youth and recognizing men and women who lead courageously. ✪

Summer Theater

The VMI Community Theatre presented an updated version of "Heroes, Hustlers, Schemers, & Scamps: Curious Characters from Rockbridge County History" on four evenings in July in Gillis Theater. This play provides brief glimpses into the lives of 21 lesser-known characters who played roles in Rockbridge County's history from the 1700s to 1974. VMI Theatre Director Joellen K. Bland has adapted the play from local histories by Oren Frederick Morton, Henry Boley, and "Remarkable Rockbridge" by Charles A. Bodie. Some material was also taken from the "Proceedings" of the Rockbridge Historical Society from 1949 to 2012. The play features thumb-nail sketches of unique characters and encourages further investigation into their lives. VMI Community Theatre will return for performances during Family Weekend, Oct. 7–9. —VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.



Superintendent's Quarters Renovations Complete

By Marianne Hause

A crown jewel and prime example of Gothic Revival architecture on post is the Superintendent's Quarters. With its copper roof, twin turrets, and prominent location by the Parade Ground, it immediately attracts the attention of visitors.

The home recently underwent a \$2.9 million renovation project that took nearly a year to complete, in addition to a full year of planning and design.

Since the home is part of the VMI historic district and is on the National Register of Historic Places, the renovation consultants included architectural historians at the commonwealth's Department of Historic Resources.

The house was completed in 1862 but was moved in 1914 from its original location, (what is now the center of the Parade Ground)



The library in the Superintendent's Quarters gets final touches in mid-June before furniture is placed.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

when the Parade Ground was enlarged from five to 12 acres. Two other houses were moved at the same time, including the current commandant's house.

Many U.S. presidents and foreign heads of state, as well as U.S. and foreign military leaders have visited the house. Like the White House and the Governor's Mansion, the Superintendent's Quarters was built for both public and private

use. According to Col. Keith Gibson '77, VMI museum system director, President Franklin D. Roosevelt was scheduled to address the Corps of Cadets in person on Nov. 11, 1939, the centennial anniversary of VMI. "Special alterations were made to the house for the president, who had been a victim of polio. A special entrance to accommodate his wheelchair and a first-floor bedroom with adjoining bathroom were quickly constructed. But when Hitler invaded Poland on Sept. 1 of that year, the president had to cancel his VMI visit. Instead, loudspeakers were placed on the Parade Ground and the president addressed the Corps as they stood in parade formation via a long-distance phone call from the Oval Office," said Gibson.

Lt. Col. Daren Payne '90, deputy director of facilities management for engineering and construction, said it has been at least 25 years since any significant renovations were done to the quarters. "This year-long project enabled us to upgrade and modernize the building with more reliable and energy-efficient systems, make the building handicap accessible, update interior finishes and furnishings, while also providing fresh landscaping, and fixing the roof and



The updated entry into the Superintendent's Quarters allows the house to be accessible to all visitors.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

Continued on next page

some exterior features. Seeing such a historic building undergo a renovation and come back to life, looking fresh and modern while retaining its historic character, is a rare opportunity,” said Payne.

The project included a new HVAC (heating, ventilation, air conditioning) system, new sewer and water lines, new electrical system, new copper roof, gutters and downspouts, plaster work, fresh paint, new bathroom fixtures, updated landscaping, and new furniture. A ramp was built from the sidewalk to the side door making the home accessible to all. A first-floor bathroom was retrofitted to comply with current ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) requirements.

A modern feature to the house is fiber optic access to the internet. Wins is the first superintendent to be able to access the VMI network from his living quarters.

The first floor, used mainly for entertaining and special events, consists of an entry hall, dining room, sunroom, kitchen, breakfast room, butler’s pantry, drawing room, game room, library, governor’s suite, and den. There is a full basement, but only partially finished. A caterer’s kitchen to be used for large special events is in the basement. The second and third floors are private quarters for the superintendent and family. ❁



STP

More than 100 incoming cadets gave up a few weeks of their summer break to participate in the Summer Transition Program (STP). This voluntary program allows them to live in barracks, eat in Crozet Hall, and work on their physical fitness prior to matriculation. Participants also completed one academic course and attended a picnic hosted by the Chaplain’s Office.—VMI Photos by Marianne Hause and Kelly Nye.



Soft Interview Room Available to Community Agencies

By Marianne Hause

Being the victim of a violent crime is traumatic and harrowing. The cold, stark, sterile environment of a police department interview room, where the victim must discuss painful details of the crime, should not add to that stress. Thanks to Project Beloved, a nonprofit organization based in Texas, the police building at VMI now has a soft interview room that can be used by departments throughout the Lexington-Rockbridge community, decorated with stylish, comfortable chairs, soft blankets, essential oils, and softly lit lamps to elevate the sense of serenity. The unveiling of the room took place Tuesday, June 14. In attendance were representatives from VMI police, VMI's Title IX office, Lexington City police, Rockbridge County Sheriff's department and Project Horizon, a local organization that works with victims of domestic and sexual violence.

Project Beloved is the brainchild of Tracy Matheson, whose 22-year-old daughter, Molly Jane, was raped and killed in 2017 in Fort Worth, Texas. Matheson started Project Beloved on the one-year anniversary of losing her daughter. "We aim to change the conversation about sexual assault and empower survivors to find their voices," Matheson said. "I researched trauma and its impact in the aftermath of sexual assault. It manifests in many ways, and can make an appearance when a victim is being asked to tell the details of a painful story."

Trauma-informed care is an approach that engages victims in ways that recognize the presence of trauma, the symptoms, and the role it plays in their daily lives. Matheson said one way to provide a trauma-informed



Becky Halterman and Tracy Matheson, founder of Project Beloved, pose in the completed soft interview room in the VMI police building on June 14.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

response (one that is supportive and compassionate) is addressing the environment in which a victim is having that initial conversation, so her organization made it a mission to transform as many of those spaces as possible. "We take that cold, stark and sterile room, and transform it into a place that is warm, inviting, and comfortable," Matheson said.

The photography art that hangs on the walls of the soft interview room adds an additional dimension to the story. The colorful floral photographs were taken by Megan Getrum, a young woman and amateur photographer, who was raped and murdered five days after Molly, by the same perpetrator. Matheson met Getrum's family at a hearing following the crimes and established a relationship. Matheson suggested the rooms be decorated with Getrum's art, and her family wholeheartedly agreed.

Project Beloved has installed soft interview rooms for law enforcement



Tracy Matheson, founder of Project Beloved, and her sister, Becky Halterman, unpack furniture and decorative items to create the soft interview room.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

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agencies around the country. “The rooms are making an impact. Victims feel more comfortable, and it’s taking that initial edge off,” Matheson said.

The soft interview room at VMI was the 49th in the country, the third in Virginia, and the first on a Virginia college campus. While the room is on VMI’s post, it is available to any law enforcement agency in the area that needs it.

Michael L. Marshall, VMI chief of police, learned about Project Beloved and the soft interview rooms from the Chief of Police Association. He and Capt. David T. Henson discussed the benefits of having a soft interview room for cadets, faculty, staff, and visitors on post who may suffer trauma, and how the commonwealth’s victim witness coordinator, surrounding law enforcement jurisdictions, as well as the inspector general/Title IX coordinator on post, could all benefit from utilizing the room. Henson reached out to Matheson last year to begin the process of acquiring a room.

“VMI administration understands the importance of this significant initiative and has demonstrated a strong desire to assist with whatever was needed to bring this project to fruition on post,”

said Marshall. “This is a positive change, how we in law enforcement can support our survivors moving forward after suffering from a traumatic experience. Captain Henson of the VMI Police Department launched this project from the onset and has guided it through completion.”

In addition to providing soft interview rooms, Project Beloved provides “Beloved Bundles.” “When a survivor goes to the hospital to have a forensic exam, many times their clothes and belongings are seized as evidence by law enforcement. The victim has nothing to wear home from the hospital. A ‘Beloved Bundle’ includes clothing, hygiene products, and other necessary items so that the survivor can leave with dignity and knows that someone cares,” said Matheson.

Project Beloved has partnered with the University of Arkansas and has established the Molly Jane Matheson Memorial Scholarship in social work. Molly planned to be a social worker and hoped to work with troubled youth. The scholarship is rewarded annually to two students, in the amount of \$2,200 each, in honor of Molly’s 22 years. ❁

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as the adrenal glands and the spleen were examined. The values will be compared to a study conducted at UR, which studied stress in brown rats taken from an urban setting, as well as lab reared rats, to draw comparisons to environmental location and stress.

Advisors for the research, Maj. Mary Beth Manjerovic and Maj. Molly Kent, both assistant professors in biology, stated that

having cadets conduct research over the summer is a great experience. “This project integrates fieldwork and laboratory-based techniques giving cadets a well-rounded research experience that highlights how questions can be addressed from multiple angles,” said Manjerovic.

Campbell’s research was part of an ongoing long-term project involving both VMI cadets as well as students from UR. Rats are subjects in additional experiments on learned behavior such as anticipating rewards for certain behaviors and even driving a small vehicle.

Campbell is from Lexington, Virginia. He plans to attend physician’s associate school after graduating.

Heavy Loads Affecting the Body

Two cadets majoring in biology explored what effects carrying a fully loaded rucksack on a high-altitude hike would have on the heart and lungs in their SURI projects: “Effects of Simulated Altitudes and Load Carriage on Cardiac Output” by Abaigeal Doody ’23, and “The Effects of Heavy Load Carriage and Simulated Altitude on Ventilatory Physiology” by Beverley Buchanan ’23.



Noah Campbell '24 works in the biology lab in July for his SURI project. —VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

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Kenny Hartless

Kenneth “Kenny” Hartless passed away Saturday, May 14, at the age of 57. He worked at VMI for 15 years, first with Aramark and then with Parkhurst. He had recently been promoted to the Parkhurst director of operations at VMI. Hartless was a retired U.S. Navy senior chief, where he worked in food service for the Navy aboard several vessels, as well as for shore installations.

His wife, Angie, is the Parkhurst front office administrative assistant at VMI. They have three sons and two grandchildren.

Lt. Col. Lee Clark '93, director of Auxiliary Services, said, “Kenny was an exceptional team member, manager, and friend. He had an

encyclopedic memory for food service at VMI. He could always accurately predict food service requirements based on the cadet schedule. He knew what cadets liked in Crozet Hall and he was dedicated to ensuring they had the best quality at all times. The Corps knew Kenny took care of them and appreciated his efforts. He provided leadership and friendship to his staff and VMI employees, and never failed to provide an uplifting word or can-do attitude. I knew that if Kenny was in charge of the event, it would be done exceptionally well and he made it look easy.”

Linda Wickline

Linda Wickline, assistant bursar, passed away Friday, July 1, at the age of 63, just two days before her birthday. She was from Buchanan, Virginia. She and her husband Preston have two daughters, one son, and four grandchildren.

She was hired in the financial aid department in 2017, and then moved to cadet accounting in the spring of 2019. In addition to her contributions at VMI, Linda’s family founded and organize the Beaver Dam Farm Sunflower Festival that occurs annually in September.

“She was the backbone of our office,” said Corey Matteson, Linda’s supervisor. “She was so knowledgeable and such an asset to our

parents and cadets. I’m going to miss her laugh and the joy she brought to our office.”

“Linda was a wonderful friend and co-worker,” said Lisa Kelly, also in cadet accounting. “She was always so thoughtful and loved doing things for other people.”

David Sigler, financial analyst, added, “Linda’s contributions to the financial aid office and cadet accounting office are immeasurable. She was an expert in her field, made all her colleagues better, and served thousands of cadets and their families with care and professionalism. Her sense of humor, love of her family, and selflessness toward others was on display every day. She was loved by her entire VMI family.”

Francis Watts

Longtime employee Francis Watts passed away July 28 in Lexington at the age of 91.

Watts served 20 years within the athletic department in various support roles, with a primary focus of managing the equipment for many of VMI’s athletic teams. While his service was principally focused on the athletic department, Watt’s interactions greatly expanded as a result of his often daily participation in support of the Corps of Cadets. In addition to his assigned duties, he fulfilled an important role of mentoring and guiding generations of cadets.

“Mr. Watts would not have described himself as a mentor to cadets, however, that’s exactly who he was,” said Brig. Gen. Dallas Clark '99. “He knew something about how to interface with the

younger generation and could be counted on for either encouragement or a frank talk about how to persevere through the VMI system and see beyond ourselves.”

Scott Wachenheim, VMI head football coach, added, “Francis Watts was one of the first men who greeted me upon my arrival on post. He was a true servant. He showed up nightly to do our laundry and distribute it to the players. It is men like Francis Watts who work tirelessly behind the scenes who are the keys to the success of any team.”

Watts was on the stage in the most recent VMI Community Theatre production this summer, and is included in the cast photo on page 13. ❁

COW Program Continues Transforming Youths

By Marianne Hause

Twenty-five promising, male, minority high-school students experienced transformation this summer through the College Orientation Workshop, Inc. (COW). This year marked the 36th year of the COW program at VMI. COVID-19 prevented the 2020 and 2021 in-person sessions.

COW is a four-week program that offers education, leadership and character

building, and physical training at no cost to the students. This year, the participants came from seven states, and the District of Columbia. Nine are rising high school seniors, nine are rising juniors, and seven are rising sophomores.

COW is the dream child of Eugene Williams '74, who is the founder and executive director. Williams was in the third class

of African American cadets at VMI. Early in his VMI experience, Williams realized that many high school aged males could benefit from the VMI style of training, even if they could not meet the requirements to become a cadet. He did not have a name for his vision, nor did he know what form it

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would take until years later. “I was blessed to be able to come to VMI, not just for the excellent academic education, but to experience the leadership and character building, as well as the discipline and camaraderie that comes with the physical training. I knew guys in my hometown who could have benefited from the training I was getting. If only for a short time, this type of teaching and guidance would have made a huge difference in the direction their lives were headed,” said Williams.

Four years after graduating from VMI, Williams became the first African American appointed by the governor to the VMI Board of Visitors. He was in a better position to make his dream become a reality.

“So many people at VMI helped bring COW to fruition. The first year, in 1987, we only had 12 kids, which was a manageable number,” said Williams. “Now we have family legacies. In 2019, we had the son of a COW grad, and we had brothers from another COW grad from Alabama.”

Williams stressed that COW is not a summer camp, but a transformational experience. “We take these kids who have promise and potential, but have failed to achieve their potential, and push them out of their comfort zone,” explained Williams. “We make them mad, scared, and tired. Why? Because the world is going to



Stan Richards Sr., successful businessman and author of “From the Bus to the Bentley: No More Limits,” challenges COW participants to reach for their goals with faith, focus, and action.—VMI
Photo by Kelly Nye.

make them mad, scared, and tired, and they will still need to get the job done. They need to know how to react appropriately to any given circumstance.” He continued, “We all need to be coached, encouraged, and supported to reach our max. This is a safe environment, and they are protected here, but they are being challenged. They must be pushed to go beyond what they think is their limit. We don’t expect perfection, but we do expect perfect effort.”

To illustrate pushing the limit, Williams de-

scribed an optional physical training activity he calls “Eat the Bear.” “Twice a week, at 6 a.m., before breakfast, we run, and we run hard. At a point during the run, you get tired, and it feels like something has jumped on your back to slow you down. That’s what I call ‘the bear.’ I tell the kids not to give in to the bear and quit running, but eat the bear and keep going. It is hard, but life is hard, and these kids are going to face so many challenges in life, they need to know they can handle anything life throws them,” said Williams.

The COW program includes classes in addition to the physical training. Participants attend daily classes in mathematics and English. They also learn CPR, public speaking, financial literacy, and career exploration. They read books written by guest speakers such as Gen. J.R. Gorham, the first black brigadier general of the North Carolina National Guard, who spent several class sessions with the participants, engaging them in discussions about life choices.

The participants enjoyed fun activities including kayaking down the Maury River, canoeing on the James River, camping, swimming, going on field trips to farms and museums, picnicking, and going to movies and restaurants.

Over the life of the program, approximately 75% of participants go on to attend college. The other 25% have attended trade schools, entered the military, or worked in other civilian pursuits.

Interested students submit an application for the program that includes an essay and an agreement to “pay it forward,” meaning they will do acts of service in the future to repay the generosity shown to them through the program. There is no charge to the students selected to the program, since in most cases, neither the participant nor his family have the resources to cover the costs. It is a fundamental tenet of the COW program, which is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, that lack of economic resources should not prevent a deserving student from participating. All funds to cover the costs of the program are raised by private donations or through the annual signature fundraising event, the COW Golf Classic, at the Country Club of Virginia in Richmond. For more information, or to donate, visit www.cow4life.org 🌸



Eugene Williams '74, founder and executive director of the College Orientation Workshop, Inc., enjoys his time with the students in early July.—VMI Photo by Marianne Hause.



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High altitude locations have low air pressure because air expands as it rises, leaving more room between gas molecules. This decreased air pressure means there is less oxygen available for breathing. The lungs and the heart must work harder to supply the bloodstream with enough oxygen. This causes shortness of breath, increased heart rate, and increased blood pressure.

According to Buchanan, “The delivery of oxygen to the muscles during intense exercise begins with the movement of air into and out of the lungs—breathing. Carrying a heavy load, a common task for soldiers, is known to add to the difficulty of breathing. As the heart and lungs work together to deliver oxygenated blood to the muscles, it is possible that the heart must overwork during such challenging conditions, causing important implications for soldiers engaged on the battlefield.”

The research involved healthy male subjects who were tested on six separate occasions, having to perform exercise tests in the hypoxic chamber, which simulates a high-altitude environment.

“The military does not stop when they reach high altitudes or when they need to carry everything on their backs, so results of the study will provide more insight into the effects carrying a heavy load at high altitudes has on the body’s ability to get oxygen to the muscles and all other vital organs. The effects of load carriage at altitude on cardiac output are mostly unknown. By furthering our understanding of altitude and load carriage on

cardiac output, we can begin to further understand how to help make it easier on the body,” said Doody.

The cadets’ advisors on the project, Maj. Dan Baur, assistant professor in human performance and wellness (formerly known as physical education), and Capt. Katie Baur, instructor in human performance and wellness, have been pleased with the research and believe their projects will have important implications for the health and performance of soldiers.

Doody is from Ladera Ranch, California. After graduation, she plans to go to graduate school where she will pursue a degree in physical therapy.

Buchanan is from Richmond, Virginia. After graduation, she plans to go to graduate school where she will study sports medicine or pharmacy.

Other cadets involved in the SURI program this summer include Morgan Boyer ’23, Max Bradley ’24, Colin Butler ’23, Stephen Castle ’24, William Caulfield ’23, Anissa Cheikh ’23, Cade Compton ’23, Alexander Feher ’23, Noland Griffith ’24, Rory Groat ’23, Gabriella Handford ’24, Ian Irizarry-Negron ’22, Lauren Kattman ’23, Christopher Kushner ’24, John Lagana ’23, Mitchell Meyer ’24, Ethan Miles ’23, Max Moreno ’24, Miles Ortiz ’24, Anna Rader ’24, William Rich ’23, Brenden Shrader ’23, Carter Steward ’23, Virginia Townsend ’24, Fuma Ueno ’23, and Samuel Wolfe ’23. ❁