



INSTITUTE REPORT

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Honors Week Held at VMI

By Marianne Hause

Honors Week, an annual event since 2003, showcases cadet research and scholarship across all disciplines. During the event held March 21–31, 34 cadets presented their research to the wider VMI community, and a large number of cadets were inducted into academic honor societies.

Michael M. Hoffmann '22, a double major in history and international studies, and who commands the 1st Battalion, defended his thesis in his presentation titled, “Kicking the Army’s Vietnam Syndrome: The Cultural Renaissance of the Post-Vietnam Army.”

In his presentation, Hoffmann reported that after the Vietnam war, the Army was inflicted by malaise, disillusionment, drug use, and terrible morale. Yet just sixteen years later in 1991, there was a decisive military victory in Iraq.

The extreme and significant change, Hoffmann argued, was due to the new culture in the Army, brought on by organizational honesty and leadership with new insight.

He describes culture as the linchpin, a vital component that holds all other aspects of the Army together.

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Army culture is the topic of the senior thesis presented by Michael M. Hoffmann '22 in Scott Shipp Hall during Honors Week.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

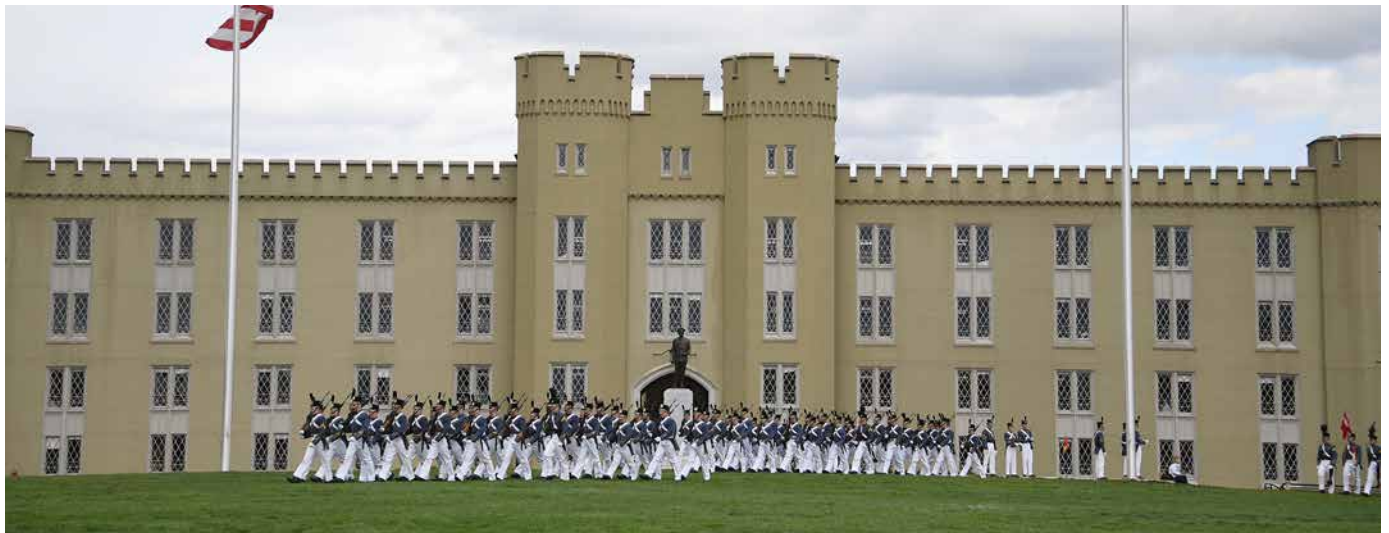
Cadets Find Array of Opportunities During Spring Furlough

By Eric Moore

The countdown to spring furlough often begins when cadets return from winter furlough. For many cadets, it's a time to visit family and friends, relax, or make memories at a vacation destination. For some, the week-long break created a window of time to give back to communities in need, enhance their skills, or represent the Institute outside of normal semester duties.

Eleven cadets, led by VMI chaplains Col. Bob Philips '87 and Lt. Col. John Casper '04, displayed servant leadership as they volunteered with Samaritan's Purse disaster relief teams over spring furlough. The team visited Mayfield, Kentucky, an area

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Retirement Parade

Col. Thomas Mortenson, associate director of admissions; Col. Holly Richardson, professor of physical education; and Col. Philip Cooper, commander of Air Force ROTC, took review of the Corps of Cadets with VMI superintendent Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85 during the retirement parade April 8. The retirees were honored for their years of distinguished service to the Institute.—VMI Photos by Kelly Nye.



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Header photo on page 1 by
Kelly Nye

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

The Art of Medieval Literature

By Eric Moore

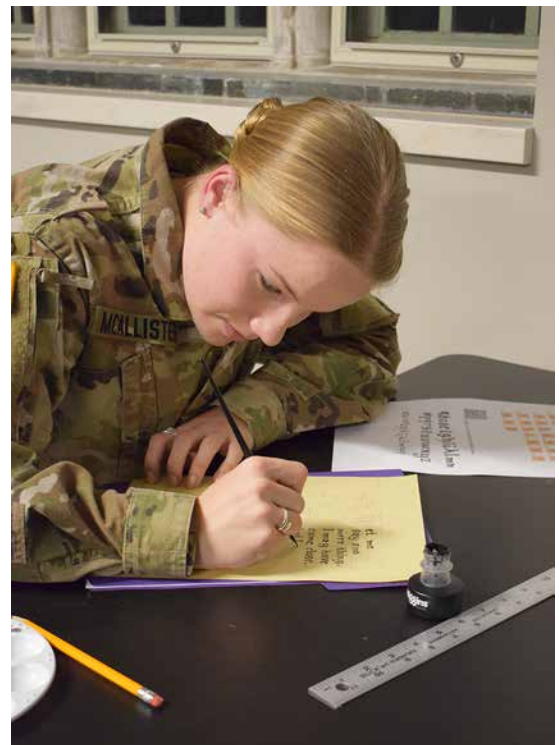
Maj. Kimberly Anderson, visiting assistant professor of English, hosted workshops in February and March on early book technologies: making medieval manuscripts and Renaissance paper. Inspired by Anderson's studies of medieval literature, the workshops provided cadets a glimpse into how medieval books were made and arranged.

While books are now easily accessible through e-book and print forms thanks to modern technology, early printing technologies required significant labor and access to funds.

"Even producing the substrate for a text, whether that be a clay tablet, a sheepskin, a papyrus scroll, or paper, took incredible amounts of work and incredible amounts of time," Anderson said. "Prior to the invention of the printing press, books were copied and decorated by hand. It might take years to complete a commission, depending on how long it was and how much the patron wanted it to be decorated."

Cadets experienced a mixture of fun and frustration learning the techniques.

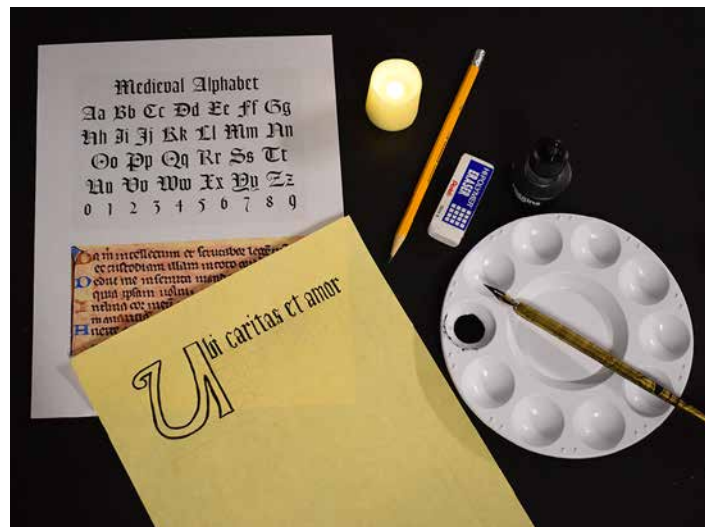
"The illuminations, calligraphy, and design elements within medieval manuscripts have always been stunning to me, so it was an interesting experience to create my own



Kenna McAllister '25 practices medieval script writing during a workshop hosted by Maj. Kimberly Anderson.—Photo courtesy of Maj. Catharine Ingersoll.

manuscript at these workshops with Maj. Anderson," participant Christina Skaggs '22 said. "It showed me how difficult it can be to write, draw, and create a medieval manuscript, so that made me have even more respect and admiration for the artists in the medieval period who created manuscripts for a living."

"We were working with ink and calligraphy pens when we made a manuscript page, and once you make a mistake, there's no going back," Anderson added. "The cadets really took advantage of the space and materials to work with some of their own writing or a piece of writing that was meaningful to them." ❁



Cadets practiced calligraphy based on the medieval alphabet.—Photo courtesy of Maj. Catharine Ingersoll.

recovering from devastating tornado damage. Cadets and chaplains have often volunteered over spring furlough throughout the years, and cadets of all faith backgrounds are always welcome to participate.

After an 11-hour car ride, the group arrived in Mayfield and surveyed the level of damage from a winter tornado. Cadets spent their days clearing farmers' fields so they could plant corn by April 1. The participants walked up and down the fields, averaging six to eight miles a day, and picked up debris ranging from roof pieces, sheet metal, branches, personal items, and books. Some of the most emotional moments came when finding children's shoes, a Bible, and family photo albums. On the last day of the trip, cadets also assisted with some demolition and painting.

"Traveling on a mission to Mayfield, Kentucky, was a purposeful way to spend my spring furlough," Daniel Walsh '22 said. "Seeing homes destroyed and families devastated was heartbreaking, but the hope that our small actions brought Mayfield made the whole trip worth it."

Connor Doyle '23 spent his spring furlough at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Hailing from Richmond, Virginia, Doyle is an international studies and history double major, triple minor, avid runner, and swim team captain. After graduation, he hopes to commission as a pilot in the Marine Corps.

During his senior year of high school, Doyle was offered the chance to train for the pentathlon, a unique Olympic sport, with the hopes of one day competing in the Olympics. Since then, Doyle has traveled to Colorado Springs nearly every year to train under world-renowned athletes and coaches to hopefully make a future Olympic team. Doyle was excited by the chance to learn new skills like shooting and fencing, and his training at VMI has uniquely prepared him for the rigorous sport.

Pentathlon is an Olympic sport comprised of five events. First documented in the ancient Olympics, the modern pentathlon was designed in the early 1900s as a military sporting event. Current events in the pentathlon include fencing, a 200-meter swim, and a combined event of cross-country running and pistol shooting. Horseback riding, which had been a part of the sport for 100 years, is no longer included.

At the Olympic Training Center, Doyle started his days around 8 a.m. with two hours of fencing



Chaplains Col. Bob Philips '87 and Lt. Col. John Casper '04, along with 11 cadets, pose with volunteers for Samaritan's Purse in Mayfield, Kentucky over spring furlough.—Photo courtesy of Samaritan's Purse.

practice. While there, he sparred with internationally renowned fencers, including members of Olympic national teams. After fencing, Doyle would swim for several hours and train with Dr. Genadijus Sokolovas, high performance director at USA Pentathlon

and one of the best swimming coaches in the world. Running and shooting practice followed, making every day long and tiring.

It's a daunting task training for the Olympics, preparing to commission, balancing two majors and three minors, and competing in an NCAA Division I sport on top of all the training required of a VMI cadet. "It's busy," Doyle said, "[but] I'll be living up to the three-legged stool: academics, athletics, and ROTC. If I can excel in all, why not try to do it?"

Doyle is driven to "be the best that I can be, prove to myself I can do it, and try to get as many people to do it with me as I can."



Connor Doyle '23 trains in fencing for the pentathlon at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado during his spring furlough.—Photo courtesy of Connor Doyle '23.

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Olmsted Trip Offers New Perspectives to Cadets

Fourteen 1st Class cadets got a taste of life in southeast Europe as they traveled to Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina over spring furlough. The trip, led by Maj. Jochen Arndt, Col. Houston Johnson, professors of history, along with Col. Dave Gray, director for the Center for Leadership and Ethics, was sponsored by the Olmsted Foundation, an organization that provides cultural immersion opportunities for cadets planning careers in the military. All participating cadets are commissioning into the military.

"The mission of the program is to provide future military officers their first significant overseas experience," Arndt said. "Each year, the trip takes cadets to a non-English speaking country (or countries), and we set up engagement activities that familiarize cadets with the national perspectives of these countries as well as the role of U.S. policy in the region. Over the past five years, we have traveled to Germany, Poland, Israel, Vietnam, and now the Balkans."

This year's trip brought cadets to cities including Belgrade, Sarajevo, Srebrenica, and Brčko where they visited museums and historical sites like the Kalemegdan, the Gazi Husrev-beg Mosque, the Latin Bridge, and the Tunnel of Hope.

The group had a briefing at the U.S. embassy and the NATO headquarters in Sarajevo, which highlighted the challenges of stabilizing



Cadets pause on the Latin Bridge in Sarajevo to take a photo with Maj. Jochen Arndt, Col. Houston Johnson, and Col. Dave Gray.—Photo courtesy of Col. Houston Johnson.

the region politically and modernizing the military forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the interest of long-term peace.

Cadets also heard first-hand accounts from locals throughout the trip of their experiences of the Bosnian War and the NATO air campaign against Serbia in the 1990s.

"One of the big goals of the program is to get cadets to meet locals and learn about their cultures and their views and experiences of U.S. interests and influence," Johnson explained. "On this trip we achieved this by sharing meals with a Bosnian Muslim family, meeting with three survivors of the Bosnian War, and talking to residents of Belgrade who experienced the 1999 bombing."

Participants were thankful for the opportunity to engage with other cultures and perspectives.

"I am incredibly grateful for the Olmsted Foundation and their passion toward exposing current and future service members to different cultures," said participant Ethan Hogan '22. "Through this trip, I was able to learn about the rich history of the Balkans and gain a newfound perspective into life outside the states. I left humbled, optimistic, but most importantly, prepared as an officer to face future challenges that require a higher level of cultural awareness."

— Eric Moore



The sun sets in Belgrade during the Olmsted trip to southeast Europe.—Photo courtesy of Col. Houston Johnson.

Environment Virginia Returns to In-Person

By Marianne Hause

The 32nd annual Environment Virginia Symposium returned to a live, in-person event on March 29–31. The event was held virtually in 2021 and canceled altogether in 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic. The event, organized and co-hosted by the Center for Leadership and Ethics (CLE), attracted nearly 400 attendees from state and local govern-

ments, nonprofit organizations, higher education and the private sector. Col. Dave Gray, director of the CLE, served as master of ceremony for the event.

Topics at this year's symposium included offshore wind energy, solar farm mitigation strategies, food waste, land conservation, nature-based and construction solutions, solutions to decreasing plastic pollution, algae bloom across Virginia, partnerships in the Chesapeake Bay and more.

The keynote session featured three newly appointed state government officials: Rob Farrell, director of the Department of Forestry (DOF), Mike Rolband, director of the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), and Matthew Wells, director of the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR).

Farrell serves as the eighth state forester of Virginia as well as the director of the DOF, which is responsible for protecting the forest resources of Virginia and ensuring trees and forests provide the greatest possible sustainable social, ecological, and economic benefits to the commonwealth. He joined the DOF as an area forester serving Gloucester and Mathews counties in 2000. He also served the agency as the first director of the forestland conservation program and as deputy state forester. In his opening statement at the symposium, he stated that two thirds of Virginia are covered in forest, a significant part of the commonwealth, and he supports and encourages good management of the forest. He stated that "job number one is forest fire prevention," with which he believes the department has done an exceptional job, "and our second mission is protecting the water during timber harvest." He also stated that he is proud of the conservation easement program, a legal agreement between a landowner and a government agency or land trust that permanently limits future development of the land to protect its



A sculpture of a turtle designed by Col. Jay Sullivan is filled with plastic to represent ocean pollution and put on display outside of Marshall Hall during the Environment Virginia Symposium. –VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

conservation values, while providing a tax reduction for the landowner.

Rolband founded Wetland Studies and Solutions Inc. (WSSI) in 1991 and grew his company into a multi-disciplinary natural and cultural resources consulting firm with a staff of more than 200. His firm constructed the first LEED Gold

facility in Virginia and utilized multiple low impact development practices for stormwater management in 2005. In 2014, WSSI was acquired by The Davey Tree Expert Co. and under Rolband's leadership, expanded to include offices in Maryland and across Virginia. WSSI assisted land developers and public works agencies navigate the Clean Water Act, Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act, and local environmental regulations. During his talk at the symposium, Rolband stated that the DEQ has a strong foundation, and he wants to build on it to make it better. He cited four main initiatives:

1. "One DEQ": The DEQ has six regional offices and a central office and Rolband wants a better balance of the workload among the offices to improve efficiency.
2. Permitting Enhancement & Evaluation Platform (PEEP): Rolband is developing a critical path management scheduling system for every class of permits that DEQ touches making the permitting process easier and more efficient. People applying for permits will be able to monitor the permit process online.
3. Stormwater Programs: Rolband plans on creating one comprehensive manual that does not expire. Currently there are five manuals that have conflicting rules and regulations. After the completion of the one manual, he plans to have training and certification requirements to reduce workloads.
4. Commodity Trading: There are streams, wetlands, and nutrients credits. Rolband currently sees there is a lack of information regarding supply, demand, and price. He wants a commodity trading platform that lets people buy and sell credits in real time and which get extinguished when associated with a permit used.

Continued on next page

Wells has 20 years of experience related to Virginia politics, policy, and environmental advocacy. Most recently, he was the senior regional manager for state government relations for WestRock, a global leader in sustainable fiber-based packaging solutions. Before joining WestRock in 2016, Wells held senior analyst and special advisory positions with Virginia's Department of Motor Vehicles and Alcohol Beverage Control. He holds a degree in foreign affairs from the University of Virginia and a certificate in sustainability from Virginia Commonwealth University. Wells stated that the parks and preserves are the "backbone of our quality of life." His focus will be on the Chesapeake Bay and the maintenance of the 2,700 dams in the state. He stated, "We must take care of our people, so my first priority is safety." He added that flood prevention and land conservation are also crucial.

A meaningful part of the annual symposium is the announcement of the Erchul Environmental Leadership Award winner. This year's winner is Bettina Ring, the chief sustainability and diversity officer for the Sustainable Forestry Initiative. The award recognizes a Virginian who has made significant individual efforts to improve the environment. Members of Virginia's environmental community nominate candidates who are judged based on their vision, expertise, commitment, integrity, communication skills, accomplishments, and diplomacy. The award is named for the late VMI professor Capt. Ronald A. Erchul, Ph.D., founder of the Environment Virginia Symposium.

Ring is an innovative and thoughtful leader with more than 30 years of expertise in the public sector and nonprofit management, natural resources management, land and water conservation, agriculture and food systems, rural economic development, and



Rob Farrell, director of the Department of Forestry, Mike Rolband, director of the Department of Environmental Quality, and Matthew Wells, director of the Department of Conservation and Recreation, speak during a panel discussion in Gillis Theater March 30.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

public policy. During her very impactful career, she has served as Virginia's fourth secretary of agriculture and forestry, as state forester (director of DOF), deputy state forester, senior vice president at American Forest Foundation, and in leadership roles with several other nonprofits.

Ring has been involved in the Virginia DOF water quality efforts since early in her career, worked on the Healthy Forested Watershed Project, and served on the Chesapeake Bay Principal Staff Committee for the last four years.

In addition to her trade missions and promotion of Virginia's No. 1 and No. 3 industries, Ring also worked with former Gov. Ralph Northam '81 and the General Assembly to increase funding for Agriculture Best Management Practices, riparian buffers, and watershed positions, and most recently in the proposed funding for re-opening New Kent Forestry Center to expand seedling capacity in the state, Trees for Clean Water, establishing the first-ever state funding for urban and community forestry and land conservation including farmland preservation funding specifically designed to address heirs property issues.

She had an active role in putting on the Governor's Summit on Equitable Collaboration.

"Ring is an outstanding leader who is very worthy of being named this year's Erchul Award winner," said Joe Maroon, executive director of the Virginia Environmental Endowment.

Each year, VMI donates \$1,500 to a nonprofit environmental organization of the recipient's choice in their honor. Ring has requested that this donation be made to Virginia Natural Resources Leadership Institute.

Other awards presented at the symposium are the Governor's Environmental Excellence Awards, which



Bettina K. Ring, the chief sustainability and diversity officer for the Sustainable Forestry Initiative and the 2022 Erchul Environmental Leadership Award winner, poses with last year's recipient, Skip Stiles, and Col. David Gray.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.

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Bissell Brings Powerful Message

By Maj. Michelle Ellwood

Sharing lessons learned from her experiences from what she called “the family business,” Maj. Gen. Marti Bissell, Training and Doctrine Command deputy commanding general-Army National Guard, spoke to cadets, faculty, staff, and other guests in Marshall Hall on the evening of Monday, March 7. She came to VMI during Women’s History Month as part of the VMI Gender Diversity and Inclusion Program.

Bissell began by describing the influence her family has had on her career. Not only has her grandfather, father, brother, husband, and son served in the U.S. Army but also her father-in-law and several brothers-in-law. She credits her supportive family and “battle buddy,” husband Col. Gary Bissell ’89, deputy chief of staff and operations at VMI, for helping her achieve her professional success.

She went on to describe her nearly 34-year journey in the Army as more like a maze than a straight path, while emphasizing a maze offers many more learning opportunities than she might have



Maj. Gen. Marti Bissell addresses cadets in the Hall of Valor March 7.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

otherwise had. In addition to her multiple assignments in the military, she’s also held roles at VMI including protocol officer and

Title IX officer, as well as assistant chief of staff.

Much of Bissell’s talk focused on the idea of the various powers that leaders may have, and how misused or mismanaged power can turn someone from a leader into a dictator. Using stories from throughout her career, Bissell discussed how a leader can help, inspire, mentor, and react to their own mistakes and the mistakes of those under them, and how a leader chooses to use power makes the difference between a good leader or a poor one. “Lead, don’t dictate,” she said, emphasizing the power of building relationships. “People will want to follow you.”

“What stood out to me was that she found power in not only your own mistakes, but also in how you respond to others’ mistakes,” said Jillian Maher ’24. “Mistakes are inevitable, but how you react to them and recover from them is what’s important.”

Bissell emphasized that people in a leadership role often have the power to “move mountains” and make significant change, but change should only be made when it’s actually needed. “People will bend over backwards to do what they think you need or you want,” she said. Leaders should not change things just because they have the power to do so, and those helping

make change should always understand the why behind it. She also emphasized leaders should work to leave things better than they were when they arrived, and to be a coach rather than a cheerleader.

Bissell recalled moments in her career when she faced challenges, including difficult language barriers as a NATO officer, soldiers affected by domestic abuse, and lost opportunities, highlighting how empathy, strong listening skills, and avoiding shortcuts have helped her along the way.

Bissell credited many people who acted as mentors and champions for her, but emphasized, while mentors are nice,



Cadets, faculty, and staff attend the address given by Maj. Gen. Marti Bissell in Marshall Hall March 7.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

Continued on next page

champions are better. She encouraged the room to gravitate toward people with similar visions and values and find champions who are genuinely willing to help and want to see them succeed.

As she wrapped up, she opened the floor to questions, and reminded the cadets who are about to pave their own paths that, “you define your success,” and that challenges are only “data points, they do not define

you.” When asked to define failure, she stated, “Failure only happens when you stop trying.” She often went back to the quality all leaders, or aspiring leaders, should have: integrity. Her strict way of defining integrity is, “Would you still do the right thing if you knew you wouldn’t get caught?”

Madison Cappellano '24 took Bissell’s advice to mean that, “life challenges you, and it is the way you redefine your goals that will

make you successful,” she said. “Being confident and believing in yourself will earn the respect of your followers in any career path you may choose.”

The VMI Gender Diversity and Inclusion Program seeks to promote gender diversity, inclusion, and respect, to foster dialogue about diversity and shared values, and to facilitate the development of strong, inclusive, and forward-thinking leadership. ✨

Career Services Holds Career Development Opportunities

VMI welcomed more than 50 employers and numerous alumni for the spring career fair hosted by Career Services on March 2 in Marshall Hall. The event offered cadets an opportunity to network with employers and explore career opportunities.

Career Services also welcomed several alumni both in-person and virtually to assist with mock interviews with cadets. As part of LS 451, Leadership and Career Development IV, cadets practiced their interviewing skills under the direction of Maj. Sara Blake and Lt. Col. Ammad Sheikh. The class prepares non-commissioning cadets to be successful in today’s workforce. Participating alumni, Patrick Griffin '80, Bob Chapman '84, Mike Shupp '81, valued the chance to connect with cadets and provide feedback and advice.—VMI Photos by Kelly Nye.





Spring FTX

Spring field training exercises were held April 1–5 on post, throughout Rockbridge County and beyond. Army ROTC spent the weekend training at the Goshen Boy Scout Camp, while Naval ROTC Marine Company marched to Sadler Farm for an overnight stay. Air Force ROTC utilized the Corps Physical Training Facility as well as other areas on post. Navy Company ROTC, including Coast Guard club cadets, trained at Smith Mountain Lake and were treated with a visit from a Coast Guard helicopter crew.

Non-commissioning cadets participated in community service activities in the Lexington area. Cadets volunteered with organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, Waddell Elementary School, Hull's Drive-In, and Lime Kiln Theater. Cadets also led the events during the Special Olympics' VMI Games in Coker Hall and Clark King Hall. —VMI Photos by Kelly Nye, H. Lockwood McLaughlin, Eric Moore, and courtesy of Malia Mantz '23 and Jessica Hankin '22.



Hoffmann credits four conscientious commanders for the turnaround of the Army culture: Gen. William Westmoreland, who saw the importance to invest in people; Gen. John Cushman, who believed in teaching people how to think, rather than what to think, and believed in the strength of providing role models; Gen. Maxwell Thurman, who made organizational improvements and is credited with the slogan, “Be All You Can Be;” and Gen. Paul Gorman, who instituted the National Training Centers, which provide realistic and effective combat training exercises.

Rachael Dickenson '22, who is double majoring in biology and civil engineering, said she chose to work with an ongoing soybean yield project because, “I believed it to be a balance of my two majors, with applications in biofuels and other engineering aspects.” She went on to joke, “I was strongly discouraged from joining because of all the work involved.”

Her thesis titled, “Performance of Soybean Cultivars in Varying Rural Virginia Sites: Effect of Site Characteristics on Shoot Structure and Yield” examined the crop which provides food products like tofu, edamame, soymilk, and soy sauce. It is also used as a high-protein animal feed. The oil from soybeans is used in margarine, cooking oil, and in biofuel applications. It is a \$168 million crop in the state of Virginia alone.

The soybean project was originally started in 2017 by previous cadets in the biology department and advised by Col. Anne Alerding. It involved planting nine different cultivars, which stands for “cultivated variety,” that is, different types within a species of plant, in two different sites within Virginia. Those sites are Orange, north of Charlottesville, which has a more clayey soil, and Suffolk, which is closer to the coast and has a more sandy soil. Once the plants were harvested, it was the task of the cadets early in the project to remove the leaves, take photographs of them, dry the plants, and manually and painstakingly count and weigh each seed.

Dickenson joined the project already in progress. She began a new phase of the project, involving



Rachael A. Dickenson '22 discusses soybean yield during Honors Week.—VMI Photo by Marianne Hause.

computer science, statistical analysis, and image analysis. She wanted to find a way, using computer programming to speed up the process of assessing soybean yield and identifying the characteristics of the cultivars associated with an increased yield.

The conclusion reached by Dickenson was that soil was less important to the yield of the crop, which she confessed, “was a bit of a surprise.” She discovered that the cultivar was more important. The work Dickenson performed will be labor saving for future studies in predicting pod to plant ratio yield.

Carson Knox '22 explored the relationship between writing and philosophy in his senior thesis presentation: “Nostromo and Schopenhauer’s Sublime.”

“Nostromo” is a novel written by Joseph Conrad, who is considered one of the greatest novelists to write in the English language. Knox considers Conrad one of his favorite authors and has enjoyed reading his books “Heart of Darkness,” “Lord Jim,” and “The Secret Agent.” “Nostromo” is one of Conrad’s lesser-known works and was chosen specifically by Knox since little research has been done on the novel. Knox admitted that the novel is a hard book to get through and is not a lot of fun to read, but worthy of studying. Written in 1904, “Nostromo” is set in the imaginary South American country of Costaguana, threatened by a revolution. The main character, Nostromo, an honest Italian seaman, seeks to restore the country’s stolen silver treasure.

Knox looked at the influence on Conrad by German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer. According to Knox, Conrad was known to

have read and was fond of Schopenhauer’s writings. Schopenhauer attributed suffering in life to what he called the “will,” which is striving, desire, urges, and the attachment to everything that exists. His definition of the sublime is the ability to escape the “will,” bringing on a state of serenity and higher knowledge. An example of such an escape would be meditating on the vastness of the universe and acknowledging oneself to be nothing.

Knox concluded that Schopenhauer’s philosophy helps the reader understand



Carson B. Knox '22 presents his senior thesis on literature and philosophy during Honors Week in Scott Shipp Hall.—VMI Photo by Marianne Hause.

Continued on next page

Conrad and the motivation of the characters he created in "Nostromo." The work is an ethical statement, which Knox believes is Conrad's purpose in writing the book. The characters perform unselfish acts for the benefit of others and the common good.

Other 1st Class cadets who presented during Honors Week include Leon M. Thomas '22, Logan M. Lamm '22, Daniel T. Hamner '22, Genevieve L. Petrassi '22, Tanner P. Mallari '22, Matthew W. Stann '22, Jacob A. Luchansky '22, Ethan J. Schlusel '22, Emma L.

Flora '22, Rhett M. Rezendes '22, Urie N. Conis '22, Christopher M. Hulburt '22, Andrew S. Broecker '22, Jonathan T. Tobin '22, Kyle W. Tidwell '22, Christopher H. Soo '22, Robert T.C. Hoeft '22, James D. Foster '22, Thaddeus Z. Wegrzyn '22, Loic R. Bignan '22, Joseph L. Malazo '22, Bridget A. Hughes '22, Drew P. Melusen '22, Noah E. Kirk '22, Alexander S. DiPrampo '22, Grayson H. Hurst '22, Ana L. Lawrence '22, Jackson D. Mercer '22, Luke S. Nicksic '22, Caleb J. Ogle '22 and Alexander N. Rice '22. 🌿

Cadet Highlights Earliest African-American Contributions at VMI

Who are considered the most influential people in building VMI? Appropriate answers may be Francis H. Smith, who served as the first superintendent, or John Thomas Lewis Preston, a founder and one of VMI's first two faculty members, but Christopher M. Hulburt '22 has a different answer. In his senior thesis "Unearthed Contributors: African-Americans at Virginia Military Institute, 1839-1851," Hulburt argues that enslaved African-Americans and free people of color in Rockbridge County were equally influential as Smith and Preston and presented his thesis during Honors Week.

Hulburt is the grandson of the late USMC retired Lt. Col. Don Travis Reed '64. He is majoring in history with minors in literary studies and Spanish. He serves as president of VMI's Omicron Delta Kappa Circle, is a peer consultant at the writing center, is Company G executive officer, a member of Phi Alpha Theta and Sigma Delta Pi, and a prosecutor on the Honor Court.

One major road-block in Hulburt's year-long research was a lack of reliable sources still remaining that document full names and family information of enslaved African-Americans and free people of color. He was able to find information in the VMI archives of two enslaved men: Michael Lyle and Ruben Howard, who were musicians and provided the crucial rhythm and cadence for VMI cadets as they marched in parades. Lyle and Howard wore distinctive uniforms consisting of red coats, white pants, and cocked hats. Their uniforms were different from those worn by the cadets, marking a clear hierarchy. At that time, there were less than 50 cadets, all white male, so Lyle and Howard were clearly recognizable and familiar to everyone on post as well as in the city of Lexington.

In addition to Lyle and Howard, Hulburt uncovered records of two additional slaves working on post: Jack, who was a baker and whose

surname was not recorded, and Anderson Dandridge, who was a cook and baker. Dandridge worked at VMI for many years, including those during the Civil War, and died in 1871. At his death, one cadet who knew him eulogized him as "a fine baker, good cook, and fair friend."

In researching free people of color during the years between 1839-1851, Hulburt continued to meet limitations in his findings. Like slaves, laborers were recorded by first name only, the literacy rate was

low within this population, so finding personal or familial records was unattainable, and it was not until 1850 when the U.S. census began to count free people of color. However, he was able to find information on a free man named Diego Evans, who had multiple enterprises: sold cigars and other goods, had a barber shop and cut the hair of cadets on post,

and operated a livery stable. Records indicated that VMI contributed in part to Evans' ventures by paying him 41 times for services he provided. In 1850, Evans and his family relocated to Liberia, Africa, and sadly soon after, died from disease.

Hulburt concluded his presentation by arguing that the tasks performed for the Corps of Cadets by the enslaved and free African-Americans during that time were vital for the day-to-day operations, and had it not been for their contributions, VMI may not have secured the subsequent state support and endowments. He went on to say that these are people who helped craft the narrative of VMI and are worthy of remembrance.

Hulburt will graduate in May and will commission in the Air Force.

— Marianne Hause



Christopher M. Hulburt '22 defends his thesis of the significant contributions by enslaved African-Americans and free people of color at VMI.—VMI Photo by Kelly Nye.

recognize successful and innovative efforts that improve Virginia's environment. This year's gold medal winners are: Catawba Hospital for Greening of Government; the City of Harrisonburg Department of Public Works for the Harrisonburg urban forestry program; Coastal Virginia Ecotourism Alliance for the Virginia Water Trail; Fauquier County for Upper Rappahannock River Water Trail; George Mason University for Mason Sustainability Council's Circular Economy & Zero Waste task force; and the University of Virginia for waste minimization.

Silver medal winners are the City of Petersburg for Appomattox River Trail University Boulevard Overlook & Trailhead; Virginia Tech for Plastic Pollution and Solid Waste Reduction Campus

Wide Working Group; and William & Mary for institutionalized composting.

Receiving bronze medal awards are Arlington-Fairfax Chapter Inc., Izaak Walton League of America for their environmental management system; Chesterfield County for North Courthouse Library Neighborhood Connector Trail; Defense Supply Center Richmond for their fuel reduction program; and Virginia Tech Office of Sustainability for their student internship program.

Receiving honorable mention is Hitachi Energy USA Inc. for their Paint Line Process Improvement Project and Smith Creek Watershed Partnership c/o Ridge to Reefs, Inc. for the Yancy Bioreactor. ✪



Braver Angels Organization Returns to VMI

Braver Angels, a national organization dedicated to depolarizing American discourse, visited Marshall Hall on Feb. 28 to facilitate a second college debate. Inspired by the debate portion of VMI's Leadership and Ethics Conference this past fall, the Building BRIDGES service club invited Braver Angels back to address a controversial topic in a safe and open format. The Center for Leadership and Ethics co-sponsored the event. The choice of topic was narrowed down by the Corps to "Resolved: Women Should be Assigned Combat Roles." More than 20 cadets and several faculty and staff members participated in the evening event. The structure of the debate instructed them to listen to the entirety of someone's argument without interruption, and speakers had to address their comments to a debate chairman.—
VMI Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



Final Roof Beam in Place

VMI faculty and staff, along with members of Whiting-Turner, the general contractor of the Aquatic Center, mark the setting of the final roof beam of the facility on the morning of Friday, March 18. Many in attendance signed the beam before it was lifted into place, a time-honored tradition in the construction industry. The roof was then able to be installed, making the building weather tight, and entering the next phase toward final completion of the project, which is scheduled for the end of this calendar year. —VMI Photos by Kelly Nye.





Superintendent's Leadership Dinner

Cadets gathered in Marshall Hall April 13 for the Superintendent's Leadership Dinner. Lt. Gen. Gwen Bingham, this year's Gen. J. H. Binford Peay III '62 Leader-in-Residence, addressed the Corps' rising leaders and challenged them to be "living your leadership legacy." She encouraged them to find their passion, be consistent in job performance, think about what they want to be known for, and take the "hard right" over the "easy wrong." The event was sponsored by the Cadet-Superintendent's Advisory Board and the Center for Leadership and Ethics.—VMI Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



Sadler Heads Wheelchair Project

By Marianne Hause

USMC retired Col. Woodson "Woody" A. Sadler Jr. '66, adjunct professor of civil and environmental engineering, has a heart for those who are wheelchair bound and spent his spring furlough this year giving the "gift of mobility" in Peru.

For 25 years, Sadler has been a member of Rotary International, a humanitarian service organization which brings together business and professional leaders to provide community service, promote integrity, and advance world understanding, goodwill, and peace. When he served as the organization's district governor for western Virginia and eastern Tennessee in 2012-13, he got the district involved with the Wheelchair Foundation, a charitable foundation whose goal is to provide a free wheelchair to every child, teen, and adult worldwide who needs one but has no means to acquire one.

According to the Wheelchair Foundation, there are 100 million people in need of a wheelchair worldwide. In addition, for every person waiting for a wheelchair, there are six caregivers tasked with laboriously carrying that person everywhere they need to go. So, for every wheelchair donated, there is relief for a total of seven people.

Since Sadler's involvement with the Wheelchair Foundation, his district has sent over 3,200 wheelchairs to Latin America. Their goal is to send a container of 264 wheelchairs to a country in Latin America every year. Each container costs \$42,000 to send.

When the wheelchairs arrive to their country of destination, members of the local Rotary International club pick up the wheelchairs from the port of entry and are responsible for delivering them to the city or village of the wheelchair recipients. Local social workers in each city or state are responsible for the application process and in identifying people in need of a wheelchair.

A delegation of 16 Rotarians from Sadler's district traveled with him to Peru, at their own expense, to personally meet each wheelchair recipient. "Each trip lasts one week," said Sadler. "We spend

four days delivering wheelchairs and three days are dedicated to fellowship with the people of the country. It is equally important to build a culture of friendship, to understand people of different nationalities, to break bread together and promote peace in the world."

Often, the delegation must journey to remote villages to deliver wheelchairs. One mayor in a small village in Peru so overwhelmed

with gratitude for the delegation traveling to his town declared, "Thank you! Nobody ever comes out this far."

So far Sadler and his delegation have traveled to six destinations including the Caribbean, Guyana, Columbia, Guatemala, Peru, and Mexico. If enough funds are raised by July, Sadler plans to deliver wheelchairs by Christmas to either Medellin, Columbia or Ecuador.

Many members of the delegation are eager to go on additional trips, which they find to be inspirational and emotionally moving. Sadler recalled one exceptionally touching episode while visiting a hospital in Columbia where many servicemen were convalescing after losing legs.

"The limbs were lost because the military is tasked with eradicating plants used for illegal drug production. Drug cartels place landmines at the base of the plants, so when the serviceman pulls the plant up, the landmine explodes. When I stopped at the bedside [of] one man, who could not speak English, but had a translator app on his cell phone, he simply lifted his phone up to me and it read, 'thank you.'"

To learn more or to donate to the program, visit wheelchairfoundation.org. Donations can be made under the "Rotary District 7570 Wheelchair Project" at the donation application dropdown. ❁



Col. Woodson "Woody" A. Sadler Jr. '66 and his wife Lori, distribute wheelchairs in Ancon, Peru during spring furlough.—Photo courtesy of Col. Woodson "Woody" A. Sadler Jr. '66.



Speaker Addresses Cadets on the Future of Nuclear Energy

Maria Korsnick, president and CEO of Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI) in Washington, D.C., recently visited the Department of Mechanical Engineering and underscored the essential role for nuclear energy. VMI offers a nuclear concentration option for cadets who plan a military or civilian career in nuclear technology. The concentration includes additional courses relating to nuclear physics and applications of nuclear technology.

"There is so much going on with nuclear energy right now, it's really quite exciting," said Korsnick. "Nuclear provides a backbone of carbon-free generation." She discussed numerous new nuclear power projects and initiatives throughout the country that are gaining traction.

Dane Hamilton '22, a major in mechanical engineering, attended Korsnick's presentation. "I thoroughly enjoyed her insights on de-carbonization, energy security and small modular reactors. I have wanted to work in green energy but never really put much thought to nuclear power in the civilian world," said Hamilton.

Korsnick further described how nuclear power plants in the future will be simpler and safer in generating electricity, and will partner with other energy sources, such as steam and hydrogen production.

Electrical engineering major, Nia Vaughan '22 stated, "The next five to seven years will be important for nuclear power as many companies want to produce their products carbon-free. Ms. Korsnick's words shine a light on the important and positive impact that nuclear energy will have."

Joseph Spears '22, a mechanical engineering major, stated, "What impacted me most from her presentation was her optimism about the future of nuclear energy in the U.S. and abroad, and how much of a game-changer the newest generation of small modular reactors seems to be."—VMI Photos by Kelly Nye.



POST BRIEFS

Jackson House Museum Offers New Tour

The Jackson House Museum is offering a tour through June titled “The Enslaved Experience,” which explores the Jackson House through the unique perspective and histories of the seven individuals enslaved by Thomas Jackson during his years in Lexington. The new tour is part of the museum’s ongoing Master Guide Tour series, an interpretive program made up of several guided tours on various topics offered on a short-term basis. The tour is offered twice daily, at 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. More information on hours and prices can be found at www.vmi.edu/museums-and-archives/jackson-house-museum.

Cadets Work Toward German Proficiency Badge

Since November, several cadets have been working toward the German Armed Forces Proficiency Badge (GAFPB), a decoration which requires the completion of six physical and military events. A demonstration of international cooperation, cadets who complete the tests display the badge on their VMI uniform and U.S. Army uniform. German attachés Oberstabsfeldwebel (Command Sergeant Major) Alexander Behrendt and Hauptfeldwebel (Master Sergeant) Christian Bensch visited post during

Based on several years of staff research, the tour focuses on the lives and stories of Albert, Amy, Hetty, Cyrus, George, Ann, and Emma—how they came to the Jackson household, stories of their time enslaved, and concludes with their lives after emancipation. Visitors may know about Jackson’s work with other local residents at the Sabbath School for the African-American population of Lexington, but they may be surprised to learn more about Jackson’s efforts to educate the enslaved teenagers, Cyrus and George. This educational effort would prove beneficial to George after his emancipation.

spring semester and briefed participating cadets on the final tests for the GAFPB, which include pistol shooting, gas mask drills, and a written combat life-saving test.

The first three tests of the badge, the German Basic Fitness Test, a swim test, and a ruck march, were held during fall semester under the direction of two German exchange cadets, 2nd Lt. Caroline Proppe and 2nd Lt. Robin Young. 🇩🇪



Class of 2023 Rank Announcements

The cadet captains for academic year 2022–23 were announced on the evening of March 9 in Memorial Hall. They are Blake Smith, regimental commander; Joseph Egbo, regimental executive officer; Herbert Brooks, 1st Battalion commander; Chris Cocoris, 1st Battalion executive officer; Morgan Boyer, 2nd Battalion commander; James Boyle, 2nd Battalion executive officer; Philip Argauer, 3rd Battalion commander; Stephen Hanley, 3rd Battalion executive officer; Lara Fritter, S1 captain; Binh Tran, S2 captain; Angeline Castagna, S3 captain; Carter Steward, S4 captain; Ryan Carpino, S4 EMS chief; Margaret Beckman, S5 captain; Miah Ruiz, S6 captain; Andrew Henderson, S7 captain; Richard Wagner, Company A commander; Connor Holland, Company B commander; Aidan Blair, Company C commander; Janine Colantonio, Company D commander; Andrew Duff, Company E commander; London Yerasimides, Company F commander; Keenan Orr, Company G commander; Austin Gonzalez, Company H commander; Thomas Marlow, Company I commander; and Luc Wilson, Band Company commander.—VMI Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.





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50th Reunion Campaign

On March 26, the Class of 1971 celebrated its delayed 50th reunion. At the parade, the class presented the initial proceeds of its 50th Reunion Campaign to the Institute, which totaled more than \$15.8 million in gifts and commitments provided by 166 brother rats. Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins '85, superintendent (far right), and David L. Prasnicky, VMI Alumni Agencies chief executive officer (far left), accept the gift from the three Reunion Campaign Committee co-chairmen, Buddy Bryan '71; James Kelly '71, who also serves as class agent; and Lanny Gault '71.—Photo courtesy of VMI Alumni Agencies.



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

For the most accurate information and event updates, please visit www.vmi.edu.

Spring Furlough *continued from page 4*

The VMI Glee Club represented the arts for the Institute and enjoyed beautiful weather in Puerto Rico over spring furlough. The group escaped a Virginia snowstorm when they departed from Roanoke Saturday, March 12, and within a day they were at the beach of Luquillo, Puerto Rico.

The Glee Club performed seven times in four days, including performances at the Conservatory of Music in San Juan, a Veterans Hospital in Juanna Diaz, at the residence of the governor of Puerto Rico, and at the Puerto Rican Senate. Cadets also enjoyed a day of site seeing, visiting the El Yunque Rainforest, Old San Juan, and the beaches at Playa Del Mar and Luquillo.

The trip was led by Col. John Brodie, music director, who was grateful for the support of Roberto Gorbea '62, Lt. Col. Jose Plaza, Puerto Rican Army Reservists, and many others. Cadets billeted at Camp Santiago and spent 28 hours traveling the island in vans driven by reservists.

“We had the opportunity to perform for the governor, senators, and the mayor of Aguadilla as well as numerous veterans, ROTC cadets, and civilians all over the island,” said Lauren Wolf '22, president of the Glee Club. “It was an amazing experience for us to travel to such a beautiful location to promote our music as well as the Institute.” 🌿