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Richmond Academy Alumni & Friends Newsletter

OFFICIAL VOICE OF THE RA ALUMNI & FRIENDS ASSOCIATION

"Snow" Grateful for RA

REBECCA SAVOY ('22)

After several dry winters, Richmond is finally seeing snow again! Though it's cold outside, we hope this newsletter warms your heart. Enjoy reading Bette Marcussen's alumni spotlight to catch a glimpse of what RA was like in the 1940s. Look through photos of our special dedication ceremony and a timeline of what our students were up to in the second quarter. Meet RA's newest sport teams and learn how they represent our school at competitions. Discover how our small school is making a big difference with its American Red Cross Club. Finally, check out our calendar of upcoming events and announcements. Thank you for being such an important part of the RA family—we're "snow" grateful to have your support!



Is there anyone you know who should be part of the RA Alumni & Friends Association? Send them this link: https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/su/PNo9W0x/alumniandfriends

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Bette poses with Rebecca Savoy—two RA graduates, 79 years apart!

"WHEN I GET TO HEAVEN, I AM GOING TO TELL HIM, 'MR. SCHAEFER, YOU WERE ONE OF THE REASONS WHY I REMAINED A FAITHFUL CHRISTIAN.'"

Alumni Spotlight

ELIZABETH "BETTE" MARCUSSEN ('43)

Elizabeth "Bette" Marcussen (née Steiker) is Richmond Academy's eldest living alumna, an inspiring link to the school's history. I recently had the privilege of sitting down with her to hear stories from her youth, RA's history, and the growth of the Adventist community in Richmond as a whole. Though she graduated more than 80 years ago, Bette's influence and passion for Christian education continues to impact the school to this day.

Bette was born in December 1925 in Takoma Park, Maryland. Her family moved to Richmond when evangelist John Ford preached a series of meetings at the Lyric Theatre. This series was so successful that it brought 232 people into the church! Bette's mother worked for the conference and stayed in Richmond to support the growing church community, giving Bible studies to many of the newly converted families. Among them was the Marcussen family—little did they know that one day, Bette would marry their son!

At the time, the Adventist community in Richmond owned a very small church on Morris Street. Richmond Academy, then known simply as "the Church School," operated from there. As church membership grew, members debated between moving to Patterson Avenue or to Brooklyn Park Boulevard for a larger church and school. Ultimately, Patterson Avenue was chosen, and its basement served as the school's home for many years until a separate school building was constructed across the street.

Bette recalls her time at the Church School with great fondness. Among her most cherished memories was the influence of her teacher, Carl Schaefer, who taught grades 6-12. His wife taught grades 1-5, and they were a dynamic team in shaping the school. Bette says, "When I get to Heaven, I am going to tell him, 'Mr. Schaefer, you were one of the reasons why I remained a faithful Christian.'" Her teacher for the last 2 years of high school at the academy was Elder Carter, a returned missionary and a very godly man who was a big blessing to the whole community. Her experiences at the Church School laid the foundation for a lifelong commitment to her faith and community.

Bette was involved in many extracurricular activities, such as a girls' choir that toured area churches. This choir was led by Wayne Hooper, a member of The King's Herald who later penned the Seventh-day Adventist anthem "We Have This Hope." And though Pathfinders didn't exist at the time, Bette was part of a similar scout group.

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It was at school that Bette met Lester, her future husband. When the Morris Street church was sold, the school temporarily relocated to Main Street before moving to Patterson Avenue. During this time, Lester's parents enrolled him at the school. He sat behind Bette in class and would often tug on her long, curly hair. Eventually, they married and had two children, Lester Jr. and David.

Bette's belief in the importance of Christian education extended to her family. Both of her children attended the Church School (known by then as Richmond Junior Academy), and so did most of her grandchildren: DJ, Julia, Katie, and Mark. Her grandson Mark especially loved attending RJA. He had wonderful teachers (such as Mrs. Joyce and Mrs. Lowe) who nurtured his faith. Bette fondly remembers going with her mother to pick out a Bible for him. Tragically, Mark passed away just before Christmas Eve at the age of 20 due to complications from a congenital heart condition. His Bible was always by his bedside, and in its back pages, he had written his favorite Bible verse: "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 24:44). Though Bette deeply misses Mark, she knows that she'll see him in Heaven soon.

Bette has great memories of her experience at RA and is so grateful for the family it has cultivated in the community. She commented, "When you're an Adventist, no matter where in the world you go, you're going to meet someone you know or who knows someone you know, because we are a family."

Today, Bette's advice to current Richmond Academy students is simple: always put God first. "I don't know how people live in this life without a relationship with the Lord," she shared. She believes the school is a mission field and loves that the local pastors are so involved and even greet the kids with a handshake every morning.

As Richmond Academy's eldest living alumna, Bette embodies RA's enduring legacy. While she's saddened to be the last of her school friend group, she made it clear that she feels tremendously blessed to be a part of its history. Her life, faith, and memories serve as an inspiring testament to the positive impact of Adventist education.



L to R: Francis Ellis, Edith Harris, Bette Steiker Marcussen, and Elaine Jenson



L to R: Grace Kemmerer, Francis Ellis, Bette Steiker Marcussen, and Elaine Jenson, 1940

"I DON'T KNOW HOW PEOPLE LIVE IN THIS LIFE WITHOUT A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD."



Dedication Ceremony Recap

On Sabbath, October 19, at 4 PM, Richmond Academy was packed with students, parents, staff, alumni, constituent church members, and other friends gathered to celebrate the school's growing enrollment by dedicating the ground where the new atrium will be built. After a special ceremony with music from the choir and handbells, messages on the value of Adventist education, and a group prayer, attendees had the chance to socialize and enjoy refreshments, s'mores, tours, and games. We are so grateful for such a supportive community!



Want to see more photos? **Access the candids here!** Looking for your backdrop pictures? **Find them here!**



Photo Timeline

See highlights of what Richmond Academy was up to last quarter!



Outdoor Ed

Grades 7&8 took learning outside on a fun trip to Holiday Lake 4-H Camp.



Thanksgiving Lunch

Many thanks to the staff and volunteers who put on such a lovely Thanksgiving feast for us!









Fall Week of Prayer

This student-led week of prayer was filled with powerful messages, sweet songs, and fun games that conveyed God's love.



DC Horizons Trip

The high schoolers visited the nation's most famous historic landmarks while on their week-long trip.



Christmas Concert

The handbells and choirs put on a beautiful show to spread Christmas cheer.



RA's New Sport Teams

Meet Richmond Academy's newest sport teams! Both the cross country and volleyball teams got great exercise and showed off their school with their good sportsmanship conduct. It was a great season!



Cross Country Team



Volleyball Team

RED CROSS CLUB AWARD

The Richmond Academy Red Cross Club (est. 2018) is a student-led organization that provides a way for members to make a meaningful impact in their communities through service, education, and advocacy. This club organizes blood drives, teaches life-saving CPR and first aid, supports disaster relief efforts, and more.

In 2024, RA's club won the Red Cross Club of the Year Award in Richmond AND the Regional Award for all of Virginia! We are so proud of our club and the good work they are doing in our community.



Gabrielle Savoy ('23-'24 RCC President) and Becky Andrews (Sponsor) at the recognition banquet.



Upcoming Events:

January 25 (5:30 PM): International Festival & Silent Auction

February 22: Choir & Bells at Richmond Evangelistic Center

March 8: Choir & Bells at Far West End SDA Church

March 9: STEM/History Fair

March 20: NHS & NJHS Induction

Dates are subject to change. Check out our live calendar at https://www.rasda.org/calendar/



International Festival & Silent Auction

SATURDAY, JANUARY 25, 5:30 PM

join us in the Richmond Academy gym on January 25th as we celebrate the diversity of cultures that make up our community. Come dressed in traditional attire and prepare for fun games, delicious food, and live entertainment. We also invite you to partake in our annual silent auction to support the Partnering for Eternity program. Hope to see you there!









We Want to Hear from You!

Have any alumni-related questions, comments, or updates? Contact us at alumni@rasda.org!