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Richmond Academy Alumni & Friends Newsletter

OFFICIAL VOICE OF THE RA ALUMNI & FRIENDS ASSOCIATION



School's Out for Summer!

REBECCA SAVOY ('22)

I don't typically cry at graduations. My eyes were even completely dry during mine! However, this past one was different. As soon as we were told to bow our heads for opening prayer, I started bawling. Seeing my little sister in her cap and gown was all it took. While changes like this can be bittersweet, I was also filled with so much pride—both for her and for Richmond Academy. I know that whatever she and all the other graduates choose to do next, they are more than prepared because of the education they have received here, which went beyond simply book knowledge. In this newsletter, I know you'll enjoy meeting Nita Reynolds, a very special alum who is returning as our new third grade teacher. Catch up on the past semester through our photo timeline and discover the unique trip our junior high took. We hope you are having a fantastic summer, and to our new alumni, remember: you will always be a part of the RA family. Come back and visit soon!



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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Nita graduated in May 2025 from Longwood University, with a BS in Elementary Education

"I'VE ALWAYS KNOWN I WANTED TO BE A TEACHER, BECAUSE LIKE MOST KIDS, I WANTED TO BE JUST LIKE MY MOM."

Alumni Spotlight

JUANITA "NITA" REYNOLDS ('21)

Four years ago, Nita Reynolds graduated from Richmond Academy, where she left a lasting impact through her involvement in handbells, Red Cross Club, Yearbook, Student Association, and more. She was known on campus not only for her academic achievements, but also for her friendly and caring spirit. This August, she's returning—not as a student this time, but as a teacher! We are so excited to welcome her back.

Q: Did you ever picture yourself returning to RA as a teacher? What makes teaching at a private, Adventist school meaningful to you?
A: I had thought about it because I thought that it would be pretty convenient, and interesting, and in a way, ideal because I know people there. I know the community, and it's such a warm community. So the idea of returning as a teacher was really exciting. Having a different title within the community is the weirdest part. It's weird walking in and having the staff talk to me like I'm a colleague. And Mr. Suarez is insisting I call him Desmond. That's so hard to get used to. I think that private schools are better able to support their teachers. Plus, I like the idea of working at an Adventist school surrounded by people who believe the same things as me and can hold me accountable. It's nice being around people with a similar faith.

Q: Were there any teachers here who inspired you to pursue education?
A: I've always known I wanted to be a teacher, because like most kids, I wanted to be just like my mom. The teachers at RA definitely inspired the kind of teacher I want to be. For example, Ms. Williams—she always knew the right way to motivate and challenge her students. She never challenged too hard, and when she did expect more than students could give, she scaled back and gave them more support. I kept note of that. Mr. Suarez also heavily inspired my attitude in the classroom. He goes into school each day beaming and making students feel welcome and inspired. And I'm so excited that I get to work there and still be inspired by him and all the other teachers too.

Q: Walk us through your journey from graduation to now. What did the path look like?
A: Well, I graduated high school still shy like I have been my whole life. But slowly during my time at Longwood University, my confidence grew. It increased as I spent more time in the classroom, too. I was a nervous wreck during my first student teaching lesson, but within a week, I was fully comfortable, joking during lessons and changing things on the spot. That transition also helped me realize, "Oh, I think this is what I'm supposed to do."

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Q: What's something you learned in college or student teaching that you're eager to bring into your own classroom?

A: My student teaching mentor teacher was amazing. It wasn't completely smooth sailing, but she really gave me all the tools and advice that I needed. I learned a lot from the kids too. I really enjoyed my student teaching experience because that is the closest you get to actual teaching the whole time you're in school. Something I'm excited to bring into the classroom is what's called Reader's Theater. It's like a play, but without physically acting it out. The kids just sit in their seats and they read the script and try to use a lot of inflection in their voice. I've used it when teaching Sabbath School at church, and I found that the kids really remember the Bible story so much more because they did something they found fun.

Q: What has surprised you most about being on the other side of the classroom?

A: How much teachers see what is going on—they're far more aware than students realize. Yes, kids are usually pretty obvious about what they're doing, but it takes being in the position of the teacher to realize how obvious that really is. When I was younger, I really thought that my teachers wouldn't see me sitting there reading a book during class. I was convinced I was being sly about it. Meanwhile, when you're in the teacher position and you're watching your kids, and they think they're being sneaky, we really see it all.

Q: What grade level will you be teaching at RA, and what drew you to that age group?

A: I will be teaching third grade. I was drawn to elementary education because I feel like that age range is very impressionable. That's really where they first begin to develop their own self-identity and self-perception. I really care about instilling a strong sense of confidence in children. The best way to do that is to do it right when they start to develop their self-image rather than when they're already in middle or high school and they already think those bad things about themselves. Plus, I love the age range. They're cute.

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Nita, Catherine Kolinek, Josh Bofetiado, and Caleb Hoffman (L to R) at a Concert Bells practice



Little Nita at her sophomore year prom

"I REALLY CARE ABOUT INSTILLING A STRONG SENSE OF CONFIDENCE IN CHILDREN."



"I FEEL LIKE I'M CONNECTED TO THE SCHOOL IN A WAY THAT I WOULDN'T BE IF I TAUGHT ELSEWHERE."



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Q: How do your former teachers or classmates react when they hear you're back as a teacher?
A: Since I attended an in-state university and I stayed involved, especially substitute teaching, I don't think anyone is really shocked. I think they're just excited that it is happening now. Honestly, I think a lot of the staff is even more excited than I am!

Q: Can you share any "this is really happening" moments you've had?
A: The first one I had was when I started student teaching. Like I said, I was nervous, but then like a week in, I realized I was finding my jam. By the end of student teaching, I had one mom write me a letter to tell me that her son adores me, and he asked to take a picture with me on the last day so that his mom could print it out for him. I had another realization when Mrs. Brown invited me to come to her classroom to pick out what pieces of furniture and decor I wanted for my own room. I just looked around her room, trying to picture next school year, and thought, "Wow. This is really happening. This is going to be my room, and I'll have my students in here.

Q: What's something your students might be surprised to know about you when you were their age?
A: I'm sure that they'd be shocked to learn that I WAS their age at one point. But in all seriousness, I think they'd be shocked to learn that I was really shy at their age. Because, again, when I'm in front of the class, I am confident. I am myself. Teaching really brings out this vibrant part of me that I'm so excited about.

Q: What does it mean to you to be both an alumna and now part of the faculty?
A: I feel like I'm connected to the school in a way that I wouldn't be if I taught elsewhere. It feels like just going back home. But it is definitely weird going from walking these halls while thinking about a math test I was going to take, to now thinking about the math test I'm going to write.



L to R: Kyla Cortiguerra, Nita, and Amy Hernandez Mendez
2021 Senior Prank!



High School











SENIOR STATS

Students: 12

Pass Rate: 100%

Scholarships Earned: $500,000+

Class Gift: Little Free Library

Class Trip: Florida (Miami & West Palm Beach)

President: Hannah Reis

Valedictorian: David Ghukasyan

Caring Heart Award: Gabrielle Savoy

Loving, Learning, Living Award 2025: Jaden Lalas









Kindergarten









Eighth Grade

Photo Timeline

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



Social Studies Fair

The Social Studies Fair took attendees to many different countries all around the world.



Soccer Playoffs

RA's soccer team played hard this season, and it paid off. Congrats to our champions!





Pi Day

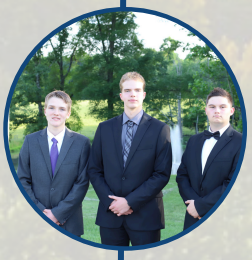
Students celebrated 3/14 with a pie-eating contest and the always popular pie throwing. Mr. Doss was pied 19 times!





Snowsports Club

Skiers and snowboarders went to Wintergreen Resort for four days of fun on the slopes.





Prom

The Student Association hosted their Phantom of the Opera prom at Oakdale RVA.

Sleepover on a Ship

The 7th and 8th grade class traveled to South Carolina for a very special camping trip aboard the legendary USS Yorktown. This one-of-a-kind adventure took them behind-the-scenes on the aircraft carrier as they explored iconic military aircraft and discovered incredible stories of heroism. They slept in the same berthing areas as soldiers once did. Ms. Wilson and Mr. Doss sure know how to make history come alive!



Upcoming Events:

August 17 (5:00 PM): Prayer Walk

August 18: First Day of School

August 24: Family Fun Day

September 2: First Soccer Home Game

October 31: End of First Quarter

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



Meet Our New 5th Grade Teacher!

JEFFREY "JEFF" LOCKE

Richmond Academy has been blessed with so much growth over the past several years that we now have individual classes from PreK to sixth grade! We're so excited to introduce the newest member of our team, Jeff Locke, who will be teaching fifth grade. Originally a graduate of Loma Linda University, Jeff has thirty years of experience across elementary school to high school and has received the Zapara Excellence in Teaching award. We are truly grateful that God has led him to RA and can't wait to welcome him into our family.









Yearbook reveal and signing—Theme: Seek and Find

We Want to Hear from You!

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