

# VALLEY SCHOLARS SUMMER NEWSLETTER



*Senior Edition*



This unprecedented academic year highlights the resilience and determination of our Valley Scholars, especially our seniors. The Class of 2021 missed many of the treasured senior year rituals, however, as with most of our Valley Scholars, they have stayed focused and persevered.

Their grit has ensured they will graduate from high school and will enter colleges such as James Madison University, The College of William and Mary and The University of Virginia in the fall.

We are extremely proud of the Third Cohort of Valley Scholars and it seems appropriate to share their accomplishments and successes as they have Envisioned, Created and Achieved.





# REMEMBERING MARTIN

The past year marked a period of unprecedented change for our generation and for many, a season of loss. Our program and students were no exception to that loss.

Three years ago, Martin was diagnosed with a rare and aggressive form of brain cancer: Glioblastoma Multiforme. Since his initial diagnosis, Martin received several treatments and experienced periods of time in remission. When the family received news his tumor had returned though, treatments were ineffective. On March 6, 2021, after several months of specialist and experimental treatments, Martin passed away at home with his family.

Despite the toll cancer would ultimately take on Martin, he refused to compromise who he was. From relearning to speak to the constant illness during treatment, Martin remained quietly determined to succeed. Instead of taking easier classes, Martin insisted on staying in AP and dual enrolled classes. Instead of giving up on playing sports, he played even when it made him sick. By all accounts, Martin was an example to others; he was a leader.

For those who knew Martin, they would say he brought with him a contagious atmosphere of joy, empathy, and gratitude. The Valley Scholars at Stonewall Jackson High School who knew him best would attest to the fact that Martin was just one of those people you wanted to be around, that he was a truly good person. All of them share stories of his efforts to make them feel welcome in Valley Scholars. They would also tell you of his hilariously bad jokes, love for Cheerwine and his favorite food: fried chicken. In other words, Martin was full of character and at the same time, was a character.

For Valley Scholars, we mourn Martin's death, but celebrate the life he lived. Martin's legacy will always be remembered as he truly left his mark on Madison.

# VALLEY SCHOLARS GIVE BACK

For the first time in a year, students were able to volunteer their time for community service. Partnered with Friends of the Middle River, several students in the Staunton area participated in Clean the Bay Day at Asylum Creek.



"Rising junior at Fort Defiance High School and JMU Valley Scholar Brenda is saddened by what she is finding along the banks of Asylum Creek.

"There's so many shredded bits of plastic, and I can't pick them all up. It's just disheartening. I don't want to be like that when I'm an adult."

~Staunton News Leader

Trash found in and around the creek is documented for further research on littering behaviors in the Asylum Creek area. The pickup included cigarette butts, food and candy wrappers, plastic bags and water bottles.

Clean the Bay Day allowed students to witness first hand how individual decisions and actions can lead to larger problems in a community or, as in this case, entire ecosystems.



Volunteering is a vital component in completing the Valley Scholars Program. Students learn important lessons on responsibility, community and giving back.



# CLASS OF 2021:

## THE JOURNEY TO NOW

In 2016 high school graduation and college acceptance seemed distant for a newly selected Valley Scholars cohort. Now, it's here. After five years of trials and triumphs, our seniors know exactly what the summer of 2021 feels like: Achievement.

Let's take a look back on some of their accomplishments:

- A total of 73 AP courses, 66 Dual Enrollment courses and 161 Honors courses were taken by our 2021 graduating class.
- Attended over 50 on campus programs, activities, field trips and online programs.
- Accepted into: James Madison University, Virginia Commonwealth University, Bridgewater College, Eastern Mennonite University, University of Virginia, Virginia Tech, Longwood, Radford, West Virginia University, College of William and Mary, George Mason University, Shenandoah University, Randolph College, Texas Tech, University of Mary Washington and University of Maryland

# CLASS OF 2021:

## LOOKING BACK

In 8th grade I remember being pulled out of my science class by a guidance counselor. She asked me if I was interested in the Valley Scholars program in which I replied that I wasn't. She told me that I should consider this program because it will be tremendously useful for my future. Hesitantly, I took the information sheet and filled it out when I got home. This was one of the most pivotal choices I have ever made for my future. I can say with conviction that the past 5 years of Valley Scholars have been exactly what my counselor told me it would be. I have made so many connections, I have learned so much and I have earned a scholarship that I couldn't be more grateful for.



Over the years I have developed many skills that I wouldn't have otherwise picked up in school. The most important of these skills is public speaking which used to terrify me. Throughout early school, I was petrified when it came to presenting in front of a class. One project in Valley Scholars, focused on how we would improve our school's environment, had us present in front of all of my peers as well as judges, which officially aided me in ridding my fear of public speaking. With that being said, I shook and stuttered the whole time but after that I could give a presentation anywhere and anytime with ease.

Most importantly however, is that I have made great friendships with present and past mentors. The mentorship we received as Valley Scholars was extremely beneficial, I can't imagine what applying to college would look like without them. In addition, I talk to most of my past mentors even today, I call or text them and ask for life advice/school advice. Thank you Valley Scholars Program for helping me in so many ways and in turn aiding me for a successful future.

-Jeremy, Broadway High School

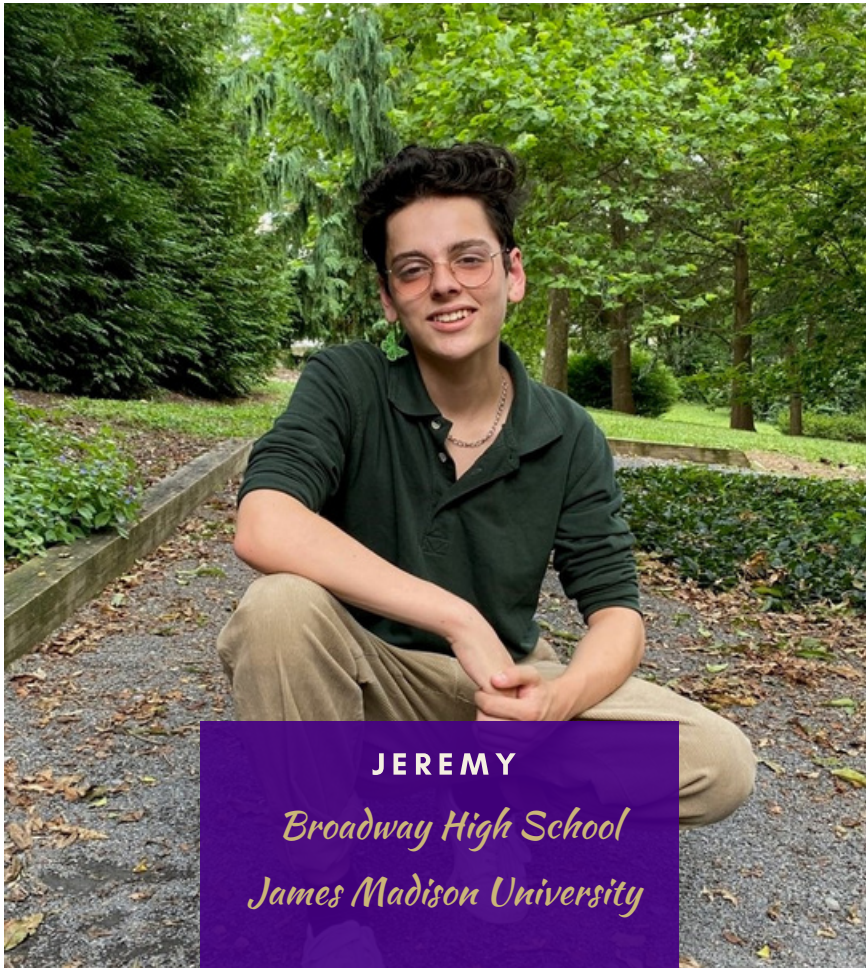


**ADRIAN**  
*Broadway High School  
James Madison University*



**COURTNEY**  
*Broadway High School  
James Madison University*





**JEREMY**  
*Broadway High School*  
*James Madison University*



**JASON**  
*Broadway High School*  
*James Madison University*







**KYLEE**  
*Broadway High School*  
*James Madison University*



**CHRISTAL**  
*Fort Defiance High School*  
*TBD*

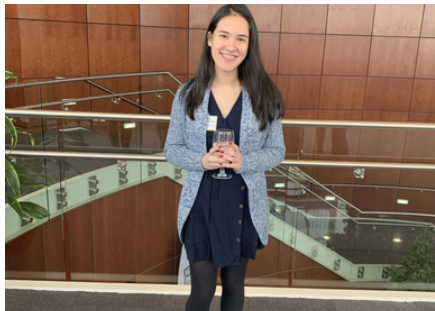




**AMELIA**  
*Fort Defiance High School*  
*TBD*



**GISLAINE**  
*Fort Defiance High School*  
*College of William & Mary*





**JOHNATHAN**  
*Fort Defiance High School*  
*James Madison University*



**KIERSTEN**  
*Fort Defiance High School*  
*James Madison University*





**KARLEIGH**  
*Harrisonburg High School*  
*James Madison University*



**GENESIS**  
*Harrisonburg High School*  
*James Madison University*





**DANAÏT**  
*Harrisonburg High School*  
*University of Virginia*



**WILL**  
*Luray High School*  
*Lord Fairfax*  
*Community College*





**OLIVIA**  
*Luray High School*  
*James Madison University*

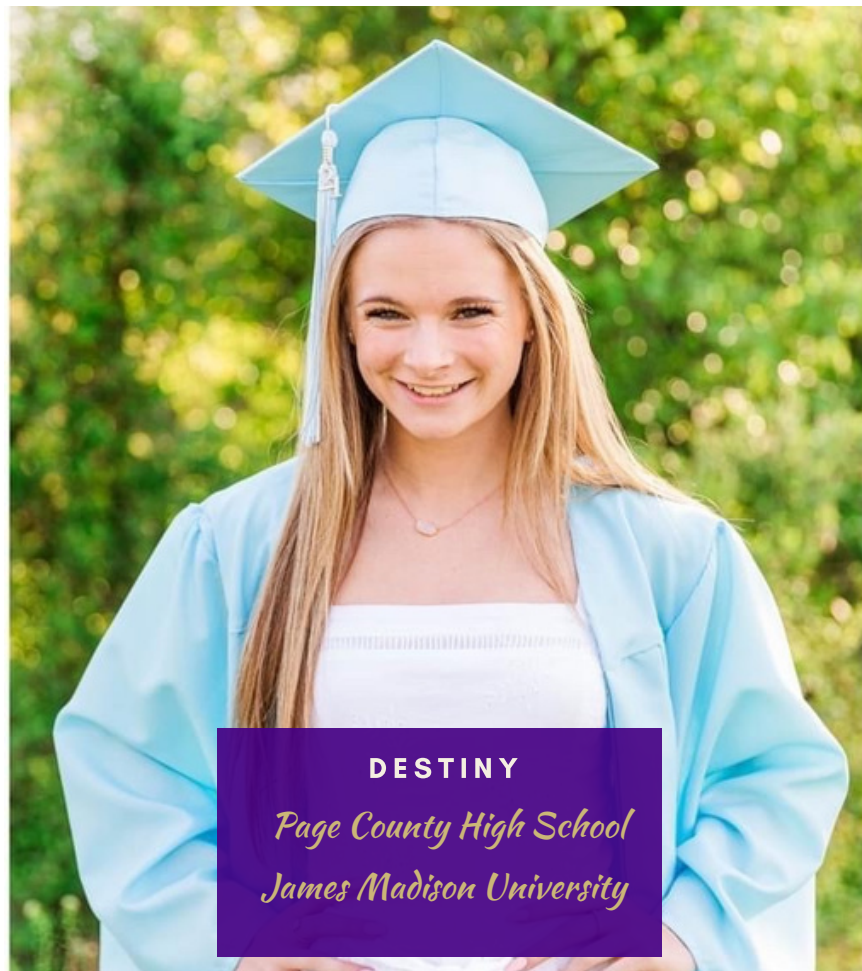


**TAYLOR**  
*Page County High School*  
*James Madison University*





**SHYLEIGH**  
*Page County High School*  
*James Madison University*



**DESTINY**  
*Page County High School*  
*James Madison University*





**J'NAEJAH**  
*Staunton High School*  
*James Madison University*



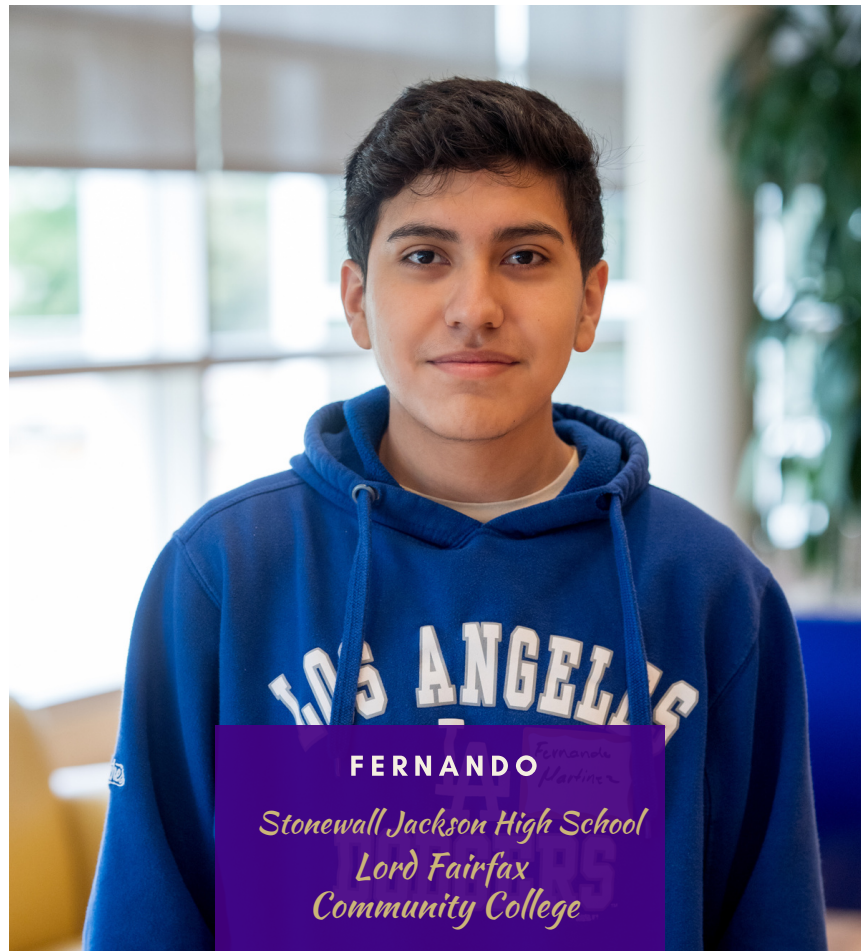
**JAMES**  
*Staunton High School*  
*James Madison University*







**MCKINLEY**  
*Staunton High School  
James Madison University*



**FERNANDO**  
*Fernando Martinez*  
*Stonewall Jackson High School  
Lord Fairfax  
Community College*



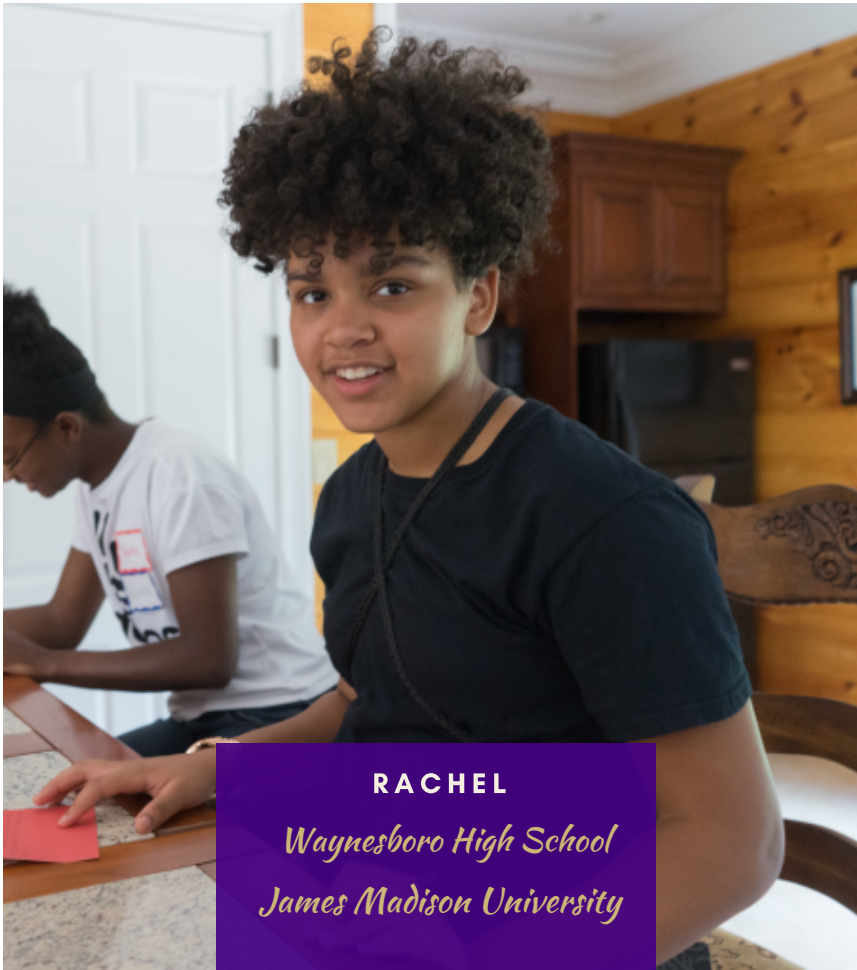


**TRISTAN**  
*Waynesboro High School*  
*James Madison University*



**CHLOE**  
*Waynesboro High School*  
*James Madison University*





**RACHEL**  
*Waynesboro High School*  
*James Madison University*



**BRIANA**  
*Waynesboro High School*  
*James Madison University*





WYATT  
*Waynesboro High School  
Blue Ridge  
Community College*



*Congratulations,  
Class of 2021!*