

# VALLEY SCHOLARS

- WINTER NEWSLETTER -

JANUARY | 2022



## VALLEY SCHOLARS WELCOMES THE CLASS OF 2026

In the fall of 2021 Valley Scholars welcomed the 8th Cohort of scholars, the Class of 2026. Throughout their entire middle school careers, our new 8th Graders were forced to navigate the COVID pandemic and find a way forward. Despite an ever-changing schedule of online, hybrid and in-person school days, students continue to maintain a high level of academic performance.

Valley Scholars accepted 49 students into the program from 11 middle schools representing Harrisonburg, Staunton and Waynesboro; along with Page, Rockingham, Augusta and Shenandoah Counties. Since then, they have attended mentoring sessions, built functioning solar panels and batteries, visited campus for their first tour and imagined, created and pitched their own inventions in a Valley Scholars' version of *Shark Tank*. It has been a busy semester, and we look forward to many more with the Class of 2026!

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*"Thankfully,  
with the  
encouragement  
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found the  
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back on."*

*-Naydelin*



## **A LEVEL ABOVE**

*Text and photos by  
Valley Scholars Staff*

With helmets, harnesses, and two sets of safety ropes, Valley Scholars took to the air for a UREC Ropes Course adventure. Even with the confidence of a safety harness, the height can be daunting. One Valley Scholar reflects on her experience of the very unnatural feeling of being tethered 30 feet in the air:

*"Being in the Valley Scholars program is already a great experience. The program gives you an opportunity to discover yourself and take risks."*

*"I stepped out of my comfort zone on a previous program day that we had. We were doing a ropes course and I had a fear of heights. The event inspired us to step out of our comfort zone and that's what I did."*

*"I got into the ropes course and took a risk. When we reached the second activity of the course, I fell off and had to get back on. I was scared and could only look down. Thankfully, with the encouragement of everyone there I found the strength to get back on. It was a great and unique way to get over one of my fears. Everyone was supportive and I don't regret it."*

*-Naydelin*

Though the ropes course isn't a typical academic program day, it's valuable in promoting student growth and perseverance.

Throughout the day, students are encouraged to work as a team, utilize critical thinking to successfully navigate obstacles, encourage others, and in the words of Naydelin, to find the strength to get back on.





## SHARKBAIT

*Text and photos by  
Valley Scholars Staff*

Valley Scholars 8th and 9th grade students participated in a program inspired by the hit ABC series, *Shark Tank*, in which business owners pitch their ideas to a panel of judges with the hopes of a shark investing in their product. Students were asked to identify one major problem in their school that could benefit from change. Each group then spent the day creating their own product, business, or program that would help solve their school's problem in an innovative way.

After several hours of brainstorming and idea development, each group of students was asked to present their creation to our panel of JMU "sharks" comprised of JMU's Engagement Fellows. Other members of the Engagement Fellow program aided our students in developing a strategy, product design, and visual aids for the audience.

Student pitches included information on their school's problem and how their invention would help solve it, along with what makes their work stand out from all the rest!

The 9th grade cohort's top invention was Study Buddies, a program that gave students more time in the school day to finish their homework and go to tutoring sessions.

Another student group created a new business called School Securely, a security system that would prevent students from stealing from or vandalizing the bathrooms in light of a recent TikTok trend. With School Securely, sensors would be installed in mirrors, sinks, and soap dispensers to detect when these items were being removed from the bathrooms.

The goal for the program was to encourage students to think creatively while advancing their skills in problem-solving and public speaking. Our students went above and beyond the challenge and created impressive final products.





- An escape room designed by Nursing students and faculty to teach patient care protocols.
- Concussion evaluation clinic conducted by Athletic Training students.
- A lesson on brain and nerve function led by Physician Assistant students.
- Learned about their identities and mental strengths with Psychology.

## A DAY WITH CHBS

*Text and photos by Valley Scholars Staff*

With the help of campus partners like the College of Health and Behavioral Studies, Valley Scholars offers a unique hands on experience to students. This program is designed to provide programming that covers general health, physical and psychological wellness and introduce several study and career pathways in the physical and behavioral health fields. Students rotated through activities such as:

Experiences offered by campus partners are a vital part of the Valley Scholars program. Not only do these hands-on program days introduce students to academic opportunities offered by JMU, they allow for self discovery of interests and values.





## PROJECT GROWS

*Text and photos by  
Valley Scholars Staff*

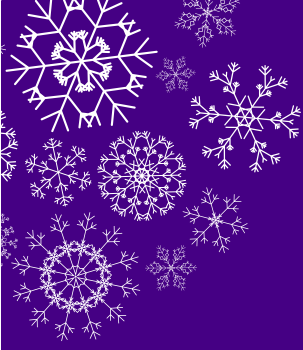
This past fall, Valley Scholar students volunteered with a community partner, Project Grows. As a non-profit educational farm, Project Grows collaborates in the Augusta County community to teach sustainable, healthy ways of living.

Despite their inexperience with agriculture, Valley Scholars arrived ready to get their hands dirty and learn how to manage crops and farmland. With the help of the Project Grows instructors, students learned the importance of maintenance for each season on the farm, the crops that are grown, and even took some treats from the fall harvest home.

The students weeded and pruned, laid tarp to protect the soil for the winter, and cleared a storage area full of plants, weeds and wood.

Students learned the importance of community investment and service to others during their time at Project Grows. Instructors with Project Grows expressed how well the students collaborated and how much work they were able to complete. They were grateful for Valley Scholars students for completing tasks that would have taken them weeks! Many of the students expressed interest in returning to volunteer at Project Grows.





## UP CLOSE AND VIRTUAL

While we do our best to keep you updated with our latest student activities, we can't share everything and we can't speak for the students. This January 25th at 11am we're going to change that.

Oscar Moreno and Ayam Ali, two former Valley Scholars and current third year students at JMU will join us for a virtual panel discussion. Currently, Oscar is studying abroad in Antwerp this semester, while Ayam has earned a paid internship with MERCK and hopes to continue with the company after graduating JMU.

Join us for a panel discussion hosted by JMU parents Marcy ('91) and Dave Kozlowski ('91) with current JMU students who successfully completed the Valley Scholars program. Hear their stories, ask questions and support our scholars!

Find more information on the event on the next page!

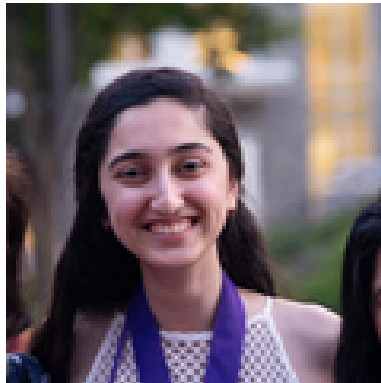




Up Close and Virtual  
Students share their stories  
of achievement

## VALLEY SCHOLARS VIRTUAL CAMPAIGN EVENT

TUESDAY, JANUARY 25, 2022  
11:30 AM - 12:15 PM



**AYAM ALI ('23)**

**Valley Scholars Graduate ('19)**  
**Major: Computer Science**  
**Minor: Writing, Rhetoric and**  
**Technical Communication**



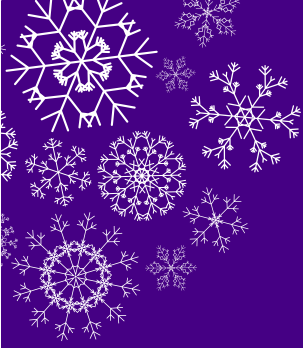
**OSCAR MORENO-TENORIO ('23)**

**Valley Scholars Graduate ('19)**  
**Major: Business Management**

Click to register for the online event [HERE.](#)

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# JACK KENT COOKE FOUNDATION



**Valley Scholars can only offer this one in a lifetime opportunity to students because of YOU, our community partners and donors. From the bottom of our hearts, thank you for all you do for the future of students and the Valley Scholars Program.**

