

A group of hikers is seen from behind, standing on a rocky mountain peak. They are looking out over a vast valley at sunset. The sky is a mix of orange, pink, and purple, with some clouds. The hikers are wearing various outdoor gear, including backpacks and hats. The overall mood is peaceful and scenic.

**James Madison University**

*Valley  
Scholars*

**FALL 2019/WINTER 2020**

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# Summer Programs

In the summer of 2019, scholars participated in a variety of enriching learning experiences. During the week long program, rising 9th graders explored the field of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) by engineering bridges and constructing DNA models. They worked in groups with the School of Communication Studies to research and present a social issue they were passionate about. Students learned skills that allowed them to develop into confident public speakers and effectively communicate their topic to an audience. To round out the summer, 9th graders visited Montpelier, home of President James and Dolly Madison, and attended a formal Etiquette Luncheon with the College of Business.

Rising 10th graders spent the week with JMU faculty and two teachers from Elkton Middle School building roller coasters based on their favorite movies. Each student wrote an MLA style essay exploring themes from their movie in our writing workshop. They received feedback on their drafts before presenting their work. Scholars also took a field trip to the Udvar-Hazy Center, home of the National Air and Space Museum outside of Washington, DC., where they spent the day learning about the evolution of aviation throughout history. Thanks to Ruby's Arcade, we finished off the week with an afternoon of pizza and games. The scholars had a blast!



# Summer Programs

Our 11th and 12th graders were able to grow in exciting ways as they tackled new adventures this past summer. They camped out in Shenandoah National Park for two nights, hiked to the top of the Blue Ridge mountains, and swam in the mountain waters of Sherando Lake. During our trip, wilderness expert “Gourmet Dave” Hennel taught us about topographic map reading, outdoor cooking, and basic survival techniques.

Another group of students composed their own poetic works in our second annual Poetry Slam. JMU's Furious Flower hosted the poetry program and brought in writers from NYC who inspired our students to find their own unique voice through poetry. The program culminated in a poetry reading attended by Valley Scholars, their families, and members of the community. During our two day long Writing Boot Camp, seniors were able to sharpen their skills by performing research in order to write MLA style essays, which they presented to the group at the end of the workshop. Thanks to our sponsor, Merck, for supporting these programs and giving our students an unforgettable summer!



# ACLU



The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) hosts an annual summer institute for high school students to learn from and work with lawyers, lobbyists, community activists, and other experts who work to defend the civil rights and liberties necessary for a free and open society. This summer twelve of our scholars participated in this institute. While in Washington D.C., they experienced in classroom sessions, lectures, and policy debates, with a focus on exploring the complex concepts of issue advocacy, legal strategy, and political decision making. Great, lasting connections were made by all. It was a great week and we are very proud of the students who represented our program! Thank you to Raquel Suarez with the Close Up Foundation for making this possible. We are excited for our scholars to have the opportunity to participate again in the summer of 2020!

# THE CLASS *of 2024*

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*Welcome!*

## The Stats

- 44 students selected from 11 different middle schools in the Valley
- 25 Females
- 19 Males

## Schools Represented

- Beverley Manor Middle School
- Elkton Middle School
- J. Frank Hillyard Middle School
- Kate Collins Middle School
- Luray Middle School
- Page County Middle School
- North Fork Middle School
- Stewart Middle School
- Shelburne Middle School
- Skyline Middle School
- Thomas Harrison Middle School

"I am most excited to have a scholarship to a good college! This program has made me work twice as hard and will make me take all the advanced classes I can in order to stay in this program."

-Jasmine, Kate Collins Middle School

"I think the things I'm most excited about in the Valley Scholars Program are the days we get to go to a lot of different places. Each place we go, we learn very interesting things. It's always something new. I'm getting to meet new friends and have fun with them. It's a great experience."

- Drew, Page County Middle School

*What they  
are saying...*

"I am most excited about the opportunities and experiences I will have being in the Valley Scholars program."

-Tzeviya,  
Skyline Middle School

"I'm most excited to meet new people."

-Lilliana, North  
Fork Middle  
School

"I think the thing that I am most excited for in the program is all of the opportunities we get to take advantage of. It opens our eyes to all the things we are capable of and what we can aspire to be when we grow up."

-Layla, North Fork Middle School

"I'm most excited to see what classes JMU has to offer and the cool opportunities that I can participate in!"

-Anyla, Kate Collins  
Middle School

# FALL PROGRAMS

We kicked off the beginning of September with our program-wide orientation and workshop day for parents and students opened by JMU's President Alger. The semester continued with weekly academic coaching sessions, college visits, and program days.

In order build relationships, the classes of 2023 and 2024 began the semester by participating in a Team Building Day hosted by University Recreation. Over the course of the semester, scholars participated in a variety of academically enriching programs with the colleges of Education, Visual and Performing Arts, and Health and Behavioral Studies.

The classes of 2021 and 2022 participated in multiple program days geared toward exploring future career paths. Scholars learned about JMU's programs for science, engineering, and health and behavioral sciences. They also spent a day in class at JMU shadowing current students, and toured the campuses of George Mason and Eastern Mennonite University.

The class of 2020 participated in two college application workshops and a financial aid workshop to get them prepared for graduation. Seniors also toured George Mason, and Virginia Commonwealth University. Many scholars have already submitted college applications and we wish them luck as they start receiving admissions decisions!



# Meet the Staff

Thanks to the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, we are happy to introduce our 2019-2020 Academic Coaches!

## Melody Hackett - Engagement Fellow

Melody graduated from JMU in May with a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and a Bachelor of Science in Anthropology. She is a first generation college student and is thrilled to be working with Valley Scholars to support students as they work toward their own college experience. Melody is an Academic Mentor in Page County and plans volunteer days. In her free time she likes to read or spend time with her friends.



## Ariana Olazagasti - Academic Coach

Ariana Olazagasti is from Bedford, Virginia, but has lived in Harrisonburg for four years while attending James Madison University for both her Bachelor's and Master's degrees. She is currently working on the second year of her Master's degree in Occupational Therapy at JMU. When she is not in class or with our valley scholars, you can find her at the barn riding her horses, hiking/camping, or on the couch with netflix or a good book!

## Jessi Pinello - Academic Coach

Jessi graduated from JMU in May of 2018 and is now pursuing a Master of Teaching in teaching English to speakers of other languages. She works with East Rock High School. In her spare time she enjoys curling up with a good book, drawing, and spending time with her family. She chose Valley Scholars because she wants to give back to the community that has given her so much over the past five years.



## Madeline Grove - Academic Coach

Madeline graduated from JMU in May of 2019 with a Bachelor's degree in Psychology. She is now pursuing her M.A. and Ed.S. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and works with the Valley Scholars at Waynesboro and Riverheads High Schools. Her favorite part about working with students is forming personal connections and helping them succeed in reaching their goals. She hopes to one day open her own private practice to provide mental health counseling services to adolescents and families.

# Meet the Staff

Thanks to the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, we are happy to introduce our 2019-2020 Academic Coaches!

## Marquis Johnson - Academic Coach

Marquis graduated from JMU in May of 2019 with a Bachelor's degree in Sport and Recreation Management. He is currently pursuing his M.S. in Sport Leadership. He is the Academic Coach at Staunton High School. His favorite part about working with the Valley Scholars is building connections with the students and being a positive role model in their lives. In his free time, Marquis enjoys playing basketball, video games, and writing about sports.



## Madeline Brawley - Academic Coach

Madeline graduated from George Mason University in May 2019 with a Bachelor's degree in Psychology. She is currently pursuing her Masters/Education Specialist degree in School Psychology. This fall, she has enjoyed getting to know the students at Buffalo Gap and Fort Defiance where she is the Academic Coach. Madeline enjoys reading, hiking, cooking, and getting wrapped up in a good TV series.

## Charlea Olmstead - Academic Coach

Charlea is from Broadway, Virginia and attended James Madison University for her undergraduate degree in Health Sciences. She is currently a second-year student in the Occupational Therapy Masters Program. When she is not studying or working, she is hiking, backpacking, rock-climbing, reading, or hanging out with her friends, family, or dogs!



## Cameron Dusman - Academic Coach

Cameron graduated from Grove City College in Pennsylvania with a degree in music education. After teaching for several years, she is pursuing her Master's in Music Education. Cameron teaches elementary school music part-time and is an Academic Coach. She loves hiking in the Shenandoah Valley's great outdoors with her adventurous & cheerful canine sidekick, Felix.

# *Thank You!*

To our donors, friends at James Madison University, and community supporters, thank you! The opportunities afforded to our scholars are made possible because of you. We are grateful for your support!

**JACK KENT COOKE**  
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