

THE HAWKS' NEST

Valley Ridge Academy

Volume 4 Issue 1
October 2017

Message From the Principal

Parents, Guardians, and Hawks,

I am pleased to welcome everyone back for a great new school year. We are well underway into the first semester and could not have gotten off to a better start! We continue to grow and now have a student population of over 1640 ranging from Pre-K students to our 8th graders. With such a tremendous range of students, there is always something fun and exciting going on. I encourage everyone to continue to look to the VRA website, the VRA Email Updates sent via School Messenger, the bi-monthly Hawk Update, the VRA PTO website, as well as your child's individual teacher's method of regular communication to stay up to date and informed.

Speaking of fun and exciting events upon the horizon, the VRA PTO is excited to announce that the 2017 Hawk Fun Run will be held on Friday November 3! This is our big fundraiser for the year and all proceeds from the run will go toward the purchase and installation of sun shades for our playground areas as well as automatic water bottle drinking stations for the hallways. To add to the excitement, our middle school students will participate in the Fun Run by enjoying a Color Run! This event should be lots of fun for the entire school! There are a number of ways that you can still get involved with the Fun Run and Color Run events and I would direct you to the VRA PTO website: <http://www.valleyridgeacademypto.com/> for information on volunteering or helping out.

Community involvement and volunteering is critical to the success of any school. VRA is no different, so I am overwhelmingly proud that our school was recently recognized and awarded the Golden School, Silver School, and Five Star Award by the Florida Department of Education and our school district. These awards are earned based on volunteer hours, training, business partnerships, family involvement, and community service. Thank you to everyone who helped to earn these designations. It was an honor to receive them on behalf of our school community! I look forward to working hard with our community to earn these prestigious awards for the 2017-2018 school year as well!

I would like to thank everyone who was able to participate in our Curriculum Chats over the past month. With the interruption due to the storm, the rescheduling of the dates was necessary so I was extremely encouraged to see such a tremendous turnout at each of the four nights. If you still have questions or were unable to make it to one of the nights, please reach out to your child's teacher directly and they will certainly be able to share with you the information that was provided.

The week of October 2nd – October 6th was Middle School Homecoming Spirit week! Each day our middle school students participated in themed dress days to show their VRA pride. To help ignite their Hawk Spirit a pep rally was held during Power Hour on Wednesday the 4th, and the whole week culminated in the first dance of the year, the VRA Super Hero Gala on Friday night! Thank you to the VRA Student Council for all of the hard work that went into making this week such a success!

The VRA Book Fair opened during the week of October 2nd and will remain open through October 13th. This is a wonderful yearly event that helps to promote our students love of literacy and it is so much fun to watch how excited they are to go and visit the book fair. Thank you to the VRA PTO for organizing and running this tremendous event.

Finally, I would like to express how impressed I have been with not just the students at VRA but the entire faculty, staff as well at the community at large, with getting back to normal after the interruption from the storm. First and foremost, I am thankful for everyone pulling together supporting each other during and immediately after the event. It is never easy to have such a large disruption but by working together, I am so happy we as a community have been able to maintain a consistent and supportive educational environment for each student at VRA. Please remember to mark your calendars for the district designated hurricane make up days of October 16th and November 10th. More information regarding the hurricane make up days, as well as community resources and outreach programs can be found at the St. Johns County School District website: <http://www.stjohns.k12.fl.us/>

Go Hawks!

Sandra McMandon

Every five years, the St. Johns County undertakes the comprehensive AdvancED District Accreditation process. [AdvancED District Accreditation](http://aprovesurveys.advanc-ed.org/surveys/#/action/28637/38121) is a powerful systems approach to improving student performance results over time. District Accreditation recognizes that increasing student achievement involves more than improving instruction. It is a result of how well all the parts of the education system, district, schools, and classrooms, work together to meet the needs of students. District Accreditation, as a quality assurance process, validates St. Johns County's outstanding accomplishments. Your feedback is critical to the success of District Accreditation. Please click on the embedded link and take 5 minutes to complete the anonymous Parent Survey. This data is vital in helping the District Accreditation process understand the culture, climate and needs of each school.

Parent Survey
http://aprovesurveys.advanc-ed.org/surveys/#/action/28637/38121



Mark your calendars...the VRA Hawk Fun Run is just around the corner! Kick off starts October 24 and the fun run will be on Friday November 3! All students will receive a custom t-shirt and will participate in the run. Middle school students will have their very own color run!

Proceeds from the Hawk Fun Run will go toward the purchase of sun shades for our elementary playground as well as water bottle filling stations for our middle schoolers. So lace up those running shoes and get excited...the Hawk Fun Run is almost here!

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<https://vimeo.com/222281617/b349062227>



Thank you to our Diamond Members



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

10/2-13	Book Fair	10/31	Report Cards Issued
10/13	End of First Quarter	11/3	Fun Run
10/16	Hurricane Make-up Day (students & staff)	11/7	Picture Retakes
10/27	PK through 5th Character Counts! Responsibility	11/10	Hurricane Make-up Day (students & staff)
10/30	Middle School Character Counts! Responsibility		

Featured Partner of the Month



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Jason and Tiffany Holbrook are Nocatee residents. Jason founded Holbrook Law in 2012 after nearly a decade defending high value wrongful death, trucking and serious injury lawsuits for insurance, trucking and other corporate entities.

Holbrook Law handles complex civil litigation, including wrongful death cases, trucking accidents, car and auto accidents, traumatic brain injuries (TBI) / closed head injuries and catastrophic injury cases.

Tiffany leads the Firm's Estate Planning practice. Before joining the Firm, Tiffany worked for a large Bank, leading the Wealth Management Trust Administration department for North Florida. Tiffany brings years of private practice experience and more than a decade of experience in estate planning, wealth management, trust administration, guardianship, probate, family foundations, wealth transfer, and banking.

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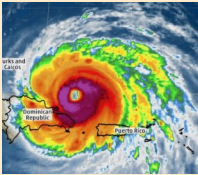
The following students were chosen by their teachers in September for exemplifying The Fairness Pillar of Character

Lidia Agyeyeva	Kiandre Elswick	Spencer Krum	Rachel Siqueira
Sofia Allen	Vince Fazzino	Andrew Lagos	Lila Smith
Connor Angst	Jayden Fernandez	Sarah Lamb	Marlana Smith
JC Anunciacion	Sydney Fernandez	Joshua Levy	Navin Sridhar
Krupa Augustin	Leo Frick	Sam Levy	Carter Schultz
Erin Barte	Ella Frye	Troy Lewis	Rowan Thomas
Olivia Bishop	Devin Fugiel	Aurelienne Love	Caden Thompson
Sofia Bostic	Demetri Gibson	Shubhangi Maitra	Tommy Tsoukias
Logan Bowling	Lila Gopal	Hanna Mason	Kory Tyler
Sofia Buckley	Jacelyn Grant	Mahir Mehmedinovic	Jesus Valencia
Lilly Burgin	Jane Grenadier	Oliver Minch	Piper Vorhees
CJ Cipolla	Connor Gustavson	Hudson Nevelos	Dylan Warren
Chloe Condit	Marissa Holgrimson	Joshua Noboa	Brooklyn Washington
Zolana Corporan	Jude Japzon	Elizabeth Parker	Rhys Wedel
Savannah Crane	Stefan Johnson	Reid Preusler	Morgan White
Richie Davidson	Evan Jones	Liam Romosz	Hunter Wright
Jenna Davis	Cole "Nash" Kersting	Matthew Rowan	Adam Yeaton
Victoria Drake	Benjamin Knoblauch	Nico Sajkowski	Gabby Zveare
Aryaneel Dutta	Ryan Kruger	Yorel Sample	
Jaden Edel	Jude Kruger	Kira Simmer	



Hurricane Make-Up Days

As a result of days lost due to Hurricane Irma the SJCS D will make up two school days. One on Monday, October 16 and one on Friday, November 10, 2017.



VRA will host their fourth annual Veterans Day Ceremony on November 9th @ 9:00 am in the gym. Students in third, fourth, and fifth grade are invited to attend the ceremony. We welcome any current members of the military, police force, and first responders as well as any veterans to attend the ceremony. Please join us as we honor our veterans.

Any questions, please contact Ms. Dresback at:
Aletha.Dresback@stjohns.k12.fl.us

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September's Art Smart: Using Your Senses With Art

This month we are teaching students to use their imagination when looking at art. Thinking about how a piece of art would feel, sound, smell, or even taste can help them understand the artist and his or her art. And it's fun! Check out the Art Smart website if you would like to learn more about this month's lesson. <http://valleyridgeacademypto.com/art/artsmart.html>



For this project, the students were asked to smell and touch mystery items and listen to sound clips and draw what each thing reminded them of. The goal is to use our senses to help us to see art from many different perspectives.

GUIDANCE CORNER

Mrs. Dail has started her guidance lessons for the year. Kindergarten students are practicing skills to help them be better learners, friends and problem solvers.

The guidance department encourages all families to work together to complete the **Second Step "HomeLinks"** that are sent home after most lessons.

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month

If you or a loved one would like more information on the early signs of domestic violence or need information please go to: <http://www.bettygriffinhouse.org/> or dial 211 for more resources.

If you , or someone you know has experienced the death of a loved one, the support of others can play an invaluable role in the healing process. Community Hospice of Northeast Florida provides an array of services that can help guide you through your personal grief journey.

Grief Services


Grief Camp



Attention All 6th Graders!!

The Tdap immunization shot is required for all 7th graders and must be recorded on a Florida 680 form. As soon as your student receives this shot, the form can be brought to the front office, faxed (904-547-4095) or emailed to (paige.lange@stjohns.k12.fl.us) even if the student is still in 6th grade. Please contact Paige Lange, Registrar at 904-547-4096 with any questions.





10th Annual Edu-Gator Contest

Attention 4th graders! Would you like to win an American Alligator for your class?

ST. AUGUSTINE Alligator Farm. ZOOLOGICAL PARK
The Zoo for You!

Answer the following prompt:
Select a Native Florida reptile and discuss the positive or negative impacts humans have had on this species. Please then tell us how you and your school can make a positive change to aid in their overall conservation?

Submissions can be essays, poems, paintings, short stories, videos, songs, sculptures, or any other format that you feel creatively answers the question.

Please see official rules for details.
Deadline is Wednesday, Nov. 1st 2017

[Please click here to download official rules, poster and entry form](#)

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT
THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT:
(904) 824-2227 ext. 29 • tmia@alligatorfarm.com
<https://www.alligatorfarm.com/edu-gator-contest/>

GOOD LUCK!!!

Transportation Services Waivers

Schools are no longer authorized to issue Bus Passes or instruct bus operators regarding bus ridership or stops. Instead, the Transportation Department is now responsible for issuing provisional Transportation Services Waivers for a specific period of time due to extenuating circumstances. Parents may apply for this waiver via the St. Johns County School District webpage under the "Transportation Department". Waivers will not be available from individual schools. This means temporary authorization to ride an unassigned bus is no longer attainable at the school level.



Middle School Sports



STEPPING UP TO MIDDLE SCHOOL



This camp focused on preparing our middle school students for success by helping rising 6th graders (and any new student) transition to the rigor and responsibilities of middle school. Students had fun and made friends while learning about locker use, note taking skills, study skills, technology use, and how to balance having up to seven different teachers. Each day included team building activities that promoted positive relationships and enhanced leadership skills.



2017-2018 National Junior Honor Society applications accepted October 18-31st. Complete the following forms and turn into Ms. Lawlor.

[NJHS Application Guidelines](#)

[NHS Application](#)

[Teacher Recommendation Form](#)



Student Council Officers

President: Joey Midkiff

1st Vice President: Max Grenadier

2nd Vice President: Rebecca Stockwell

Secretary: Alondra Alvarez

Treasurer: Charlotte Stockwell

Historian: Beshara Nazi



Middle School students are represented by both a girl and a boy from each homeroom that serve as the Student Council representatives. Representatives and officers meet once a month and sometimes more often, depending on the events or activities we are sponsoring. Regular meetings of Student Council are the first Wednesday of the month at 8:00am in the Media Center. Reminders are posted in the middle school hallways. Some of the activities and events that Student Council has sponsored are school dances, ambassadors to new students, Goodwill Bag It Up clothing drive, and community service projects. Student Council representatives held their first meeting in September and are currently working on 3 major projects.

October will be a busy month. Spirit Week/Homecoming is October 2 – 6. Each day, students will dress up for different themes. On Wednesday, Student Council officers will be announced at a middle school Homecoming pep rally, and Friday will host the first Super Hero Gala. We will have our own VRA DJ, games, food for purchase for middle schoolers to party like a Super Hero. October 23 – 27 is Red Ribbon Week, when we focus on character and living a drug and alcohol free life.

Clean Up Irma Campaign: Student Council, in partnership with Spanish Honor Society, is collecting personal hygiene products to help those in our community displaced by Hurricane Irma. Toothpaste, shampoo, soap, and other toiletries will be collected throughout the month of October. Please consider making a donation. Donations may be dropped off in room 623, Mrs. Anzualda's Office.



There will be a Best Buddies Club interest meeting for students in 4th – 8th grade on Thursday, October 12th in Room 503 after school. Please see the link below for more information on this exceptional program.

<https://www.bestbuddies.org/what-we-do/mission-vision-goals/>

Focus on Health

School Year 2017-18

Nutrition and Physical Activity

Nutrition

Everything you eat and drink over time matters. Start with small changes to make healthier choices in food and beverages that you can enjoy. Recommendations from the 2015-20 Dietary Guidelines include:

- Make half your plate fruits and vegetables.
 - Focus on whole fruits.
 - Vary your veggies.
- Make half your grains whole grains.
- Move to low-fat and fat-free milk, cheese or yogurt.
- Vary your protein routine (seafood, lean meats and poultry, eggs, legumes (beans and peas), and nuts, seeds, and soy products)
- Drink and eat less sodium, saturated fat, and added sugars.

For more recommendations and information on healthy eating, go to the Dietary Guidelines 2015-20 at <https://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/guidelines/table-of-contents/>

DID YOU KNOW?

Healthy food for kids start with breakfast:

Kids who eat breakfast everyday concentrate better in class, have more energy during the day, and score higher on tests.

Boil some eggs at the beginning of the week and offer them to your child along with low-sugar, high protein cereal and an apple to go.

Resources

Kids Health from Nemours

- Fitness and Your 6 to 12 Year Old <http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/fitness-6-12.html?WT.ac=p-ra>
- Fitness and Your 13 to 18 Year Old <http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/fitness-13-18.html?ref=search&WT.ac=msb-p-r&op=en-search-cl#>



USDA ChooseMyPlate.gov <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/myWine>

Physical Activity

Children and adolescents should do 60 minutes (1 hour) or more of physical activity daily.

- Aerobic: Most of the 60 or more minutes a day should be either moderate or vigorous aerobic physical activity, and should include vigorous-intensity physical activity at least 3 days a week.
- Muscle-strengthening: As part of their 60 or more minutes of daily physical activity, children and adolescents should include muscle-strengthening physical activity on at least 3 days of the week.
- Bone-strengthening: As part of their 60 or more minutes of daily physical activity, children and adolescents should include bone-strengthening physical activity on at least 3 days of the week.

It is important to encourage young people to participate in physical activities that are appropriate for their age, that are enjoyable, and that offer variety.

DID YOU KNOW?

Activity adds up! Here's one way to get your 60 minutes:

10 minutes – Walking/biking to a friend's house

+ 30 minutes – Shooting hoops

+ 20 minutes – Dancing

= 60 minutes of activity!



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Volunteer/Visitor Clearance

All persons requesting access to our building to volunteer or visit classrooms, including eating lunch with your student, **MUST** have an approved School Access Form on file. If you have not already been cleared, please submit a [school access form](#).

Once cleared, ALL visitors/volunteers must present a state issued identification upon signing in at the front office.

If you already have clearance, please do not submit an application. Expired accounts will be rerun automatically.

Dismissal/Transportation Changes

All changes will now be e-mailed.

Please use this link:

<https://surveys.stjohns.k12.fl.us/TakeSurvey.aspx?SurveyID=74LI9525>

This link will lead you to the dismissal change form.

It is also available on our school website.

Changes over the phone will not be accepted.

2:00 PM is the deadline every day except Wednesdays.

1:00 PM is the deadline on Wednesdays.

You're Invited!

Annual UpLift with A.S.S.I.S.T
Dinner/Silent Auction

Thursday, October 19, 2017
6:00-9:00 PM
Character Counts Conference Center
First Coast Technical College

"Breaking Down Barriers...
One Student at a Time"

Ticket Information: \$25.00 Donation
Ink-Stjohns.org

For more Information: Call (904) 547-7589

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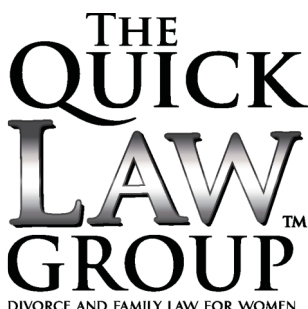
What are Spirit Sticks®?
Spirit Sticks® are the best student rewards ever! They are small embroidered patches students display on a backpack.

How do students earn them?
There are lots of ways to earn a Spirit Stick®! Some ways students can earn them include: good grades, exceptional attendance, participation, great behavior, and so much more!

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On their backpack! Students will receive a special key ring to attach to their backpacks.

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