The Rodman Chronicles

ABOUT THIS EDITION

Each month, the Rodman program aspires to bring you the latest happenings among the community. This edition, we highlight the many unique events that occur within the Rodman community during the month of October, including Young Alumni Weekend, Parents’ Weekend, and Rodman Festival (RodFest).

This newsletter also highlights two of the five Rodman Seminars held this semester—one focuses on community service, while the other allows students to explore the great outdoors! Finally, the article concludes with a service update on our monthly service project, this time to Loaves & Fishes food pantry.

We hope you enjoy this month’s edition of The Rodman Chronicles! Please feel free to reach out with any questions, comments, or concerns you may have.

Warmest Regards,

Catherine Pollack & Sean Sequeira
Communications Co-Chairs, Rodman Council
YOUNG ALUMNI RECEPTION

The Rodman Scholars Young Alumni Reception (YAR) was held at the renovated Wilsdorf cafe on October 17th. We had about 15 recently graduated alumni visit and discuss their current jobs and endeavors with Professor Elzey and several current scholars. One alumni now works at the largest cell phone compliance testing firm in the United States while other alumni are launching and building startup tech companies. The alumni fondly reminisced about their time in Professor Elzey’s first year Synthesis Design class and the study abroad programs such as the Germany Volkswagen trip while enjoying hors d’oeuvres provided by Rodman Council. The event was a huge success as both past and current scholars enjoyed telling fun stories with one another. —Danial Hussain

PARENTS’ WEEKEND

On Saturday, October 24th, the Rodman program hosted an event for Parent’s Weekend consisting of a presentation given by members of the Rodman Council followed by a reception.

Led by Joey Hsu and Benjamin Gilbert, the presentation gave an overview of the Rodman program to the families of the Rodman Scholars in attendance. It covered all aspects of the program, from academic advising to the first-year class with Professor Elzey to social events such as the annual Rodman festival. It also touched on the diverse activities in which Rodmans are involved, including advanced research and high-profile internships. At the end, Joey and Ben emphasized the informal benefits of the program as well. Many Rodman Scholars find some of their best friends in the program. With such a talented and varied group of scholars, it is little wonder that many Rodmans stay connected throughout their time at the University of Virginia and thereafter.

After the presentation, all were invited to a reception. Everyone had a great time socializing and meeting all of the family members. Professor Elzey was in attendance and met many of the parents for the first time. The scholars themselves also mingled, getting to know each other better in the process. The informal atmosphere of the reception contributed to a sense of community and close-knit friendship that in many ways defines the Rodman Program as a whole.

Overall, the Parent’s Weekend event was a resounding success. Everyone in attendance commented afterwards on how much they learned about the program and how much they enjoyed getting to know each other. The parents, especially, were happy to get a glimpse of the everyday lives of their students within the Rodman Program. They left confident in the program and what it provides for their students. —Matt Gummersbach
RODFEST

Amid the leaves changing hue and the onslaught of midterms, the Elzey residence hosted around sixty Rodmans at their beautiful home in rural Charlottesville. This event, known as Rodfest to the Rodman community, is a time for Rodman scholars to have a rendezvous at a location other than Thornton Hall to, quite simply, meet, greet, and eat. With a bucolic backdrop, scholars were able to enjoy delicious food prepared by Professor Elzey’s wife, Christina Elzey, as well as join in the camaraderie that is a staple of the Rodman community. They were able to enjoy themselves off of Grounds while playing soccer, Frisbee, football, and engaging in a friendly trivia competition. The Elzey’s graciously open their homes to the Rodman community annually to ensure that the Rodman community remains intimate, inclusive, and strong. A special thanks goes out to the Elzey family for setting up the event and to Rodman Council for the coordination of the event. —Sean Sequeira
OUTDOORS

It’s a Friday afternoon around 1. Many are just finishing classes for the week, and it’s time to destress. Most students are doing Friday-afternoon-things, preparing for a great weekend at their seasonal residence in Charlottesville—throwing a Frisbee on the Lawn, talking in dorms with friends, maybe still studying—but a handful of lucky Rodman Scholars are at Rice Hall ready to be picked up for a weekend camping trip.

Camping?

Yes, a camping trip! As one of the many exciting Rodman Seminars available to Rodman Scholars each semester, Outdoor Rodman Seminar allows students to explore the wilderness with friends. The seminar is composed of a series of individual “excursions” that usually require only a few hours over the weekend. Scholars have participated in activities from canoeing in the Shenandoah to hiking Humpback (a famous trail near Charlottesville) to skydiving—literally jumping out of a plane! These stellar opportunities go to show that not only does the Rodman program expand their mental capacity, but it also provides students with a variety of opportunities to engage in adventures many would shy away from. —Matt Anderson

COMMUNITY SERVICE

While some may think a student’s academic success is purely a product of schoolwork, a study cited in Malcolm Gladwell’s Outliers concluded that academic support outside of school—whether at home or in the community—is comparably influential. Perhaps this is why community outreach is so popular (and successful) among groups like the City of Promise.

The headquarters of City of Promise is bustling most days after school. Joined by University of Virginia Scholars from the Rodman Service Seminar on Thursdays, middle-school-aged kids from the Charlottesville area have the ability to receive optional tutoring and to engage in hands-on engineering projects. Among several different options of exciting design challenges, the young minds found themselves particularly enamored by bridge building.

Project-based learning like bridge building facilitates learning. After spending time and effort on the internal strength of the prototype, the kids realized that they had not considered the strength of the connections to each side of the “canyon.” As expected, the kids quickly and intuitively knew which connections to fix. In an experiential and tactile way, rather than in an artificially and distant one like in a classroom, the kids had taught themselves that the old adage holds true: a chain, or object, is only as strong as its weakest link, or part.

Outreach isn’t the only path to success. Each child will still have a life outside of the outreach program, time which the outreach programs won’t be able to influence. That being said, the service work which Rodman Seminars have been completing this semester is an example of the potency of projects like this. Support outside of the classroom is imperative for the academic development of students, and the concepts and skills learned in these seminars will surely resonate with participants. —Matt Anderson
For an October service project, a group of Rodman students and program director Dana Elzey went to Loaves & Fishes food pantry on Saturday, October 17 from 10am to 1pm. Loaves & Fishes provides food assistance to low income families and individuals in the Charlottesville area. The pantry is set up like a grocery store instead of handing out prepared bags of food; this helps reduce waste from sending generic, unwanted items to customers. In a typical month, they feed approximately 1500 families; during the three hour shift the Rodman group attended, over 500 people benefited from a family member or members visiting the pantry!

First, volunteers helped visitors sign in. After receiving a food ticket, families met with a volunteer to guide them through the aisles, as other Rodman helpers outside braved the chilly, fall air to help visitors load food into their vehicles and return shopping carts. Volunteers outside the Rodman group restocked shelves as items disappeared from shelves throughout the morning.

Mary-Michael Robertson (pictured below) was one volunteer who aided in showing families through the facility. She had these kind words to say about the service project: “Volunteering at Loaves and Fishes was a wonderful experience! I loved having the opportunity to interact with members of the Charlottesville community who were warm, welcoming, and receptive to our efforts to help out. This project also presented an excellent opportunity to spend time with Rodman friends and Professor Elzey [also pictured below] in a meaningful setting outside of our usual academic and social interactions.”

During the shift, another Rodman student collected tickets from families, greeted them, and organized the flow of people into the shopping area. This was first year Rodman Leo Dominguez on that Saturday and he was so greatly touched by the experience, as were the other Rodman volunteers. He thought “it was a little slice of life. This little old lady walks up to me and hands me the ticket that says how many people she’s picking up food for...and it says she’s getting food for twelve people...I can’t even relate what that must be like.”

As Leo summed up, the event was successful, emotionally rewarding, and worthwhile for all involved. Now we cannot wait for the November service projects!

— Kathleen Galligan

Special thanks to Matt Anderson, Leo Dominguez, Joey Hsu, and Mary-Michael Robertson for their contributions
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If you have a great idea for a column in the newsletter, please reach out to Co-Communications Chairs Catherine Pollack (cpp3qz@virginia.edu) or Sean Sequeira (sbs6eh@virginia.edu). We’d love to hear from you!

UPCOMING EVENTS

- November 21st—Habitat Store

Stay tuned for more information regarding other Rodman events throughout the semester!

Best of luck with the rest of your midterms from Rodman Council!