

RWA



News

WWW.ROYALWESTACADEMY.COM

DECEMBER 2019 – JANUARY 2020

A Word From The Administration

Ms. Angela Vaudry, Principal
Mr. Steven Manstavich, Vice-Principal
Ms. Christy Tannous, Vice-Principal
Ms. Candice Madden, Vice-Principal (interim)

The Administration would like to start by wishing members of the Royal West Academy community a prosperous New Year. We hope you all enjoyed a restful holiday surrounded by loved ones.

Changes at RWA

There have been a few recent changes to the RWA community.

Ms. C. Madden has been appointed interim Vice-Principal at Royal West Academy. Ms. Madden comes to us from the Student Services department, where she served as a consultant. Her appointment means that our former interim Vice-Principal, Ms. A. Dillon, has returned to her teaching post within our school. We would like to thank Ms. Dillon for all her hard work and would like to welcome Ms. Madden to the team.



Ms. P. Ramales has been temporarily assigned to Royal West Academy as a main office secretary. She is replacing Ms. K. Skyers. Mr. R. Speranza is replacing Ms. D. Swanson who took a position as a consultant at the school board.

Levés de fonds

Les mois de décembre et janvier nous ont tenus bien occupés à l'Académie Royal West. Nos levées de fonds Penny Wars et Homeroom Challenge au profit de Tyndale St-Georges, la collecte de jouets pour les élèves de l'école primaire Westmount Park (grâce à Mmes G. Purdy et S. Macleod), et la collecte de denrées non-périssables pour soutenir les familles de l'école

secondaire John Grant (merci à Mmes S. Di Pietro, D. Colannino, et les préfets) ont aidé plusieurs familles dans le besoin. Social Justice et We R One ont aussi fait une collecte de denrées. Ces deux groupes ont amassé plus de 745 livres de denrées non-périssables pour le NDG Depot (merci à Mme A. Reddy).

Tyndale Week

The weeks of December 2–6 and 9–13 saw RWA students and staff working together for a wonderful cause (*see page for 6 details*). Homerooms competed against one another to see who could collect the most money, non-perishable food items, and toys to support Tyndale St-Georges Community Centre, John Grant High School, and Westmount Park Elementary School. Our annual Penny Wars was a great success as all of our students and staff did a fantastic job promoting the event, and worked together to show what great work Royal West Academy can do to help those less fortunate. During that week, students raised over \$6200 for Tyndale St-Georges Community Centre, which offers support programs and services for underprivileged communities in the southwest sector of Montreal. Our Secondary I students won the grade-level challenge, winning the prize of an afternoon off that will be awarded on February 25, 2020. Ms. C. Almeida's 104 homeroom also earned a pizza lunch for raising the most money by a homeroom. A huge thank you to Mr. J. Bateman and the Leadership and Leisure Studies classes for their commitment to the Penny Wars grade-level challenge and to the homeroom teachers for organizing and helping to motivate the student body for this amazing local charity.

Holiday Music Concert

La tradition s'est poursuivie avec notre Holiday Music Concert, dirigé par Mmes G. Purdy, S. Macleod et M. A. Van Alphen. Encore une fois cette année, ce fut un concert à ne pas manquer. Des performances de notre chorale A Cappella, de nos groupes RWA Winds, RWA Jazz Band, et bien sûr de notre Honour Band. Au



menu cette année, des classiques du temps des fêtes ainsi que de nouveaux arrangements; de quoi commencer les fêtes du bon pied.

Hello, Dolly!

The school musical this year ran on December 16–19. *Hello, Dolly!* was based on the play *The Matchmaker*. The cast performed beautifully and should be congratulated on their talent and dedication. Ms. E. Kuch and her team of volunteers of both parents and students made the performance seamless and a pleasure to watch. Special thanks to Mr. D. Floen, Ms. S. Westlake and Mr. C. Barillaro (RWA class of 2004).

Course Selection

Le mois de janvier a débuté avec des assemblées et des visites en classe pour expliquer le Course Selection Form aux élèves en Secondaire I à IV. Chaque étudiant doit rapporter le formulaire complété et signé pour pouvoir s'inscrire à RWA pour l'année scolaire 2020–2021. Si un élève change d'idée quant à ses choix de cours, un changement peut être effectué, tant et aussi longtemps qu'il reste suffisamment de place dans le cours. Nous demandons tout de même qu'un parent envoie une lettre signée indiquant le changement à Mme C. Reece, notre technicienne en organisation scolaire. Si votre enfant, présentement en Secondaire I à IV à RWA, n'a pas l'intention de poursuivre ses études parmi nous l'année prochaine, nous vous demandons d'envoyer une lettre à l'école pour indiquer vos intentions. Les élèves de Secondaire V ont quant à eux reçu une session d'information sur les CEGEPs.

Variety Show

Wow do we have talent! Our annual Variety Show took place on January 10 with over 20 acts, exposing us to a "variety" of songs, music, and dance. The proceeds from the event went to Chez Doris, a local women's shelter, and the Royal West Academy Foundation. If you missed it, learn from your mistake and go next year! A huge thank you to all the Execs and SLA for organizing the event, and to Ms. A. Dillon, Ms. E. Mannard, and Mr. J. Zigby for their leadership and guidance.

Winter Concert

Les élèves en musique nous ont offert deux merveilleux concerts (Winter Concert) le 14 janvier en matinée, et les 15–16 janvier en soirée (*voir détails en page 5*). Avec leur talent incroyable, les élèves ont offert une performance formidable dont ils peuvent être fiers.

Nous tenons à remercier Mmes G. Purdy et S. Macleod, ainsi que MM. A. Van Alphen et Bowles.

Glee

On December 1, our Glee club students took part in the Just For Kids Foundation Glee Showdown Competition and placed second out of ten teams. Our students also took third place for their fundraising, having raised over \$700. Congratulations to all our students and thank you to Ms. L. Kissin for all her hard work.



Winter Carnival

Le 21 janvier, le personnel et les étudiants de RWA ont participé à notre journée annuelle du carnaval d'hiver (*voir détails en page 11*). Les élèves ont pu choisir une des six activités hivernales offertes : le ski ou la planche à neige, les raquettes, le hockey, la glissade en tube, la cabane à sucre ou des activités à l'école. Même si la température était légèrement sous la normale, les conditions étaient excellentes grâce à la récente tombée de neige. À l'approche des examens de mi-année, cette journée était une bonne façon pour tous de se décontracter et s'amuser. Les membres de l'administration souhaitent remercier M. J. Zigby, le SLA, et tous les enseignants pour leur aide dans la réalisation de cette activité.

Painting weekend

Once again this year, we must acknowledge the efforts of our parent volunteers. On the weekend of December 7–8, a number of parents volunteered to paint for anywhere from a few hours to the entire two days. Led by Mr. P. Tamakuwala and Mr. C. Reynel Aguilera, volunteers repainted the two guidance counsellor offices, classrooms 209 & 310, the work desk in 307,

and both doors in room 308 as well as touch-ups in the Auditorium and to doors throughout the school.

A big thank you to all the parent volunteers for their continued support of RWA. Your efforts have helped make our school a place we can all be proud of.

Comment s'attaquer au deuil

Pendant la journée pédagogique du 29 novembre, nos conseillères en orientation, Mmes R. Klisouris et C. Schreiber ainsi que Mme D. Swanson ont invité à RWA Mme D. Cruchet, conseillère en deuil (*voir détails en page 13*). Mme Cruchet a présenté son atelier à une trentaine d'élèves, intéressés à en apprendre plus sur le deuil après la mort d'un être cher. Pour lire l'article (en anglais) de CBC News allez au <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/royal-west-death-workshop-1.5379774>

A part of our history

Have you ever gone through some of your old things, only to find an unexpected treasure? That's exactly what happened to Gregg Blachford. While going through some of his grandmother's things, Mr. Blachford found an old medal from the Aberdeen School. Royal West Academy currently sits on the grounds of the old Aberdeen School, which was founded in the late 1800s. Muriel Harkness (1898–1987) received her medal from the Aberdeen School in 1911 for General Proficiency in School Studies. We are honoured that Mr. Blachford offered to donate his grandmother's medal to Royal West Academy. This artifact will be added to our collection in the display case found in the foyer of our main entrance.



À l'Académie Royal West, il y a toujours de l'action! Vous pouvez vous tenir au courant en visitant notre site web www.royalwestacademy.com, en nous suivant sur Twitter @RoyalWestAcad, et en consultant le calendrier de l'école ainsi que le compte Schoology de votre enfant.

SHARING THE STAGE WITH YOU.

By Mr. Mitchell White, RWA Foundation President

Happy New Year from the RWA Foundation!

I am thrilled to have some very exciting news to share with you to kick off this new decade!

Late last year, we received confirmation that the EMSB has allocated \$900K to Royal West Academy to go towards our new performing arts venue, with the potential of an additional \$550K from the provincial government, a project we've been raising funds for more than ten years. With this money, our project is actually going to happen.

That money, combined with another \$500K that the Foundation has raised through the generosity of the parents and school community over the years, brings us closer than ever before to making this new performing arts venue a reality.

In fact, of the \$2.2 million dollars originally budgeted in 2012 for this project, and factoring in the cost-of-living increases since then, we only need to raise another \$400K–\$500K together as a community, to get things under way in the fall of 2020. That means that if your child is in Secondary III or lower, you can help by making a donation now, and your child will directly benefit from this new state-of-the-art venue for the rest of their time at RWA. If your child is graduating, you'll be leaving an amazing legacy for the school's future students, just like the parents who were here 15 years ago did when they raised money for the new gym our kids enjoy today.

We are so close—but we need your support to colour in the thermometer and close this campaign. So please, donate whatever you can—and keep in mind all your donations are 100% tax-deductible, which really helps reduce your tax bill.

This final campaign push for the last few dollars needed for our new performing arts centre will be ramping up over the coming weeks. If you would like to help, just send me an email at info@rwaf.ca.

Wouldn't it be amazing to watch our kids perform in a proper auditorium with comfortable seating, great acoustics, the best sound and lighting systems, and a ventilation system that allows for air conditioning in hot weather and heating in the cold?

This dream is so close to coming true. Please help us make it so!

Our School's Science Fair

By Allison Engo



To Infinity and Beyond!

With this year's Science Fair being fast approaching, students are already preparing their projects! Students get to pick a field of interest and present it to a wide audience of parents, teachers, students, and even the occasional scientist. Don't let this rare opportunity pass you by. Many Royal West Academy participants have gone on to the provincial and Canada-wide science fairs to present their ideas and we have certainly brought back our fair share of medals and scholarships.

The school Science Fair is an annual signature event at Royal West Academy coordinated by Ms. J. Pevec and Ms. A. Dillon. The fair is open to students from Secondary II to V and they must participate at least once during high school. This is the time to discuss your

passion and get excellent feedback. It's a fun way to channel your inner scientist and go outside of the typical classroom teaching experience.

Going all the way to the national level means rubbing elbows with all the other bright and motivated scientists from across Canada. From personal experience, it was the most exciting and eye-opening experience of my life. I got to do radio and print interviews and even got to meet Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to present my project to him. Before you think it's all science and no play, you should know that there is a lot of time devoted to landmark exploration, banquets, and out-of-province trips.

The RWA Science Fair is a great way to expand your mind and explore your inner scientist. Who knows? It may lead you to a lifelong pursuit to save the planet, advance medicine or create the next engineering breakthrough. Get inspired and come visit this year's Science Fair on February 13, 2020, during the public viewing times at 11:30–12:30 AM and 7–8 PM!

To volunteer your time as a judge or to make a prize donation, contact Ms. Pevec at rwasciencefaircoordinator@gmail.com.

Secondary I Trip: Camp Bon Départ

By Wallace Naftali Torres



This year's Royal West Academy newcomers experienced a wonderful and fun weekend by heading to Camp Bon Départ, which is an hour and a half away from Montreal. The camp is located up in Wentworth-Nord, a municipality in the Laurentians.

Here the Secondary I students experienced the beauty of the camp's wilderness. This was a great way to begin the year and allow for students to interact with their peers—while being out in a refreshing natural environment!

On this trip, students engaged in multiple physical and outdoor sporting activities. They engaged in archery where they were taught how to shoot bow and arrows, cooperative teamwork games where they learned how to communicate with each other and work as a team, obstacle courses that gave them a challenge during rain, and enjoying the camp wilderness. Then at night they had a campfire to finalize their experience at the camp.



Allison Engo presenting her project to honourable Kirsty Duncan and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau at the 2018 Prime Minister Fair.



One activity was unfortunately rained out but they still managed to learn and experience how great of a place Camp Bon Depart is. Students were placed in cabins in random groups where they got to know their classmates—and hopefully made friendships that will last a lifetime! The students really enjoyed how charismatic the animators and coordinators were.

All in all, this camping trip should yield several benefits to the participating students who will be having fun and gaining one of many great memories from their years at Royal West Academy!

Double the Music, Double the Fun

By Jiamei Wang



Only two weeks after the bustling holidays, the many students involved in Royal West Academy's music department came together to successfully showcase the fruits of months of practicing and rehearsing at the annual Winter Concert—or should I say concerts? For the first time in our school's history, the music program's record number of enrolled students led to the Winter Concert being split into two separate evenings, on January 15 and 16. With 120 music students in Secondary II alone, it's no surprise that stage space became a big issue! The shows featured four ensembles: the Secondary II and III bands, the snazzy Jazz Band and Honour Band—conducted by the beloved Ms. G. Purdy, Mr. A. Van Alphen, and Mr. Bowles.

At RWA, music is only taken as a full-time course beginning in Secondary II—therefore many, if not most, of the Secondary II students performing had only been playing their instruments for four months! “My favourite part of the show has always been and will likely always be the Secondary II performance,” says Ms. Purdy, marking 20 years of her teaching at RWA this year. “For most of these students it is their first concert experience. This, to me, is magical. I love feeling their energy and seeing them rise to this challenge.”

On the other hand, Secondary III students in their second year already have performing experience and played remarkably on stage. I enjoyed the dark and intense *Vortex* by Robert Longfield best.

Because this year's grade-level ensembles were split between the two evenings, students had to adjust to being in smaller numbers on stage, and this was beneficial to their overall musical experience. It compelled them to listen closely to each other, allowed them to feel more comfortable, and challenged them to



perform better.

As a member of Honour Band myself, I was lucky enough to experience both concert nights through the perspective of both an audience member and a performer. Though performances are usually nerve-wracking, I felt less stressed this year because the crowds were smaller. My favourite piece from this season's repertoire was definitely *By the Rivers of Babylon* by Ed Huckleby, the final performance and showstopper on both evenings, because of its lyrical passages and uplifting atmosphere.

Concerts are a great source of exposure for RWA's music department: amongst proud parents that come to watch their children perform are also future Royal West Academy parents and students, and I was once one of them. Additionally, the profits help alleviate financial strain, as we are no longer able to charge instrument rental fees.

All in all, the double Winter Concerts were most definitely a major success. Our music students are now more motivated than ever to improve on their instruments, so be sure to come by during our Spring Concerts in May 2020 for even more amazing performances!

Royal West Dance Show

By Serena Silver

Commitment, Creativity, and Friendship

The Royal West Academy Dance Show, a student-run ECA, has been a huge part of the RWA community for many years. The show raises money for Dans La Rue, an organization that helps homeless youth. Dance Show embodies commitment, creativity, and friendship.

Over 100 RWA students have been dedicating their time to choreograph and practice each week. Every year the show includes about 20 scenes with various styles of dance including salsa, reggae, and ballet. Jessica Lee, one of the contemporary choreographers is "so proud to be a part of the dance show. It's great to contribute to a good cause, while having fun at the same time."

I am one of six executives (or "execs") of the dance show and involved in every aspect. Being an exec has allowed me to give back to RWA. I have also been able to express my creativity and love of dance and had the opportunity to develop long-lasting friendships.



Tryouts are held in early September and practices run until late March. This year, the show will take place on March 20, 2020, at 6 PM and 9 PM. In the months leading up to the show, the execs run tryouts, create scenes, schedule practices, and choreograph. Efficiency and organization are key to a successful show, yet there are always challenges along the way. This endeavour requires teamwork and communication. Under Mr. J. Zigby and Ms. A. Todi's guidance and support the team works diligently in order to make the production a success.

As showtime approaches, decisions and videos need to be made regarding the theme. Other tasks include designing and ordering original logo apparel for the cast, organizing tickets, seating arrangements, and opening and closing numbers. Despite the hard work and commitment, it is extremely rewarding and always a huge success.

Come enjoy the show, you won't regret it!

The Liveliest Week at Royal West

By Markus Fares

One of the most enjoyable times at Royal West Academy is during Tyndale Week. During that week, there are countless fundraisers going on around the school to help raise money for Tyndale St-Georges Community Centre. This community centre's goal is to help the people of Little Burgundy and to provide them with many services for their education.



Every year, Royal West Academy raises a lot of money with Tyndale Week and it is due to the many fun activities that are organized around the school. One of the biggest ones is Penny Wars—a friendly competition

between grades to see which grade can put the most amount of coins in their grade bucket by the end of the week. This year, Secondary I won and they were rewarded with half a day off. While all this is going on, there are many people around the school selling a wide variety of foods, games or objects. This is because the students of each homeroom are asked to come up with week, small scale businesses can be seen all around the school selling treats and other things for Tyndale.

This year, one homeroom in particular had very creative ideas to raise money and they were very successful. Ms. P. Tsagaroulis and her homeroom were able to raise over \$350 for Tyndale with their creative business ideas. They sold many things from ramen noodles at lunch to cereal in the mornings. They even had a hot chocolate bar where students were able to put a variety of toppings in their hot chocolate.

Tyndale Week brings a lot of fun to the school and it is a great time to be creative and have a good time while helping people out.

Pink Shirt Day

By Alyssa Fon

Royal West Academy's annual Pink Shirt Day took place during the week of November 17–23 to accompany the anti-bullying week that occurred not only in our school, but all throughout Canada. On November 19, the majority of the students and staff of Royal West Academy attended school wearing a pink shirt—not only uniting our school but also showing the support we have for a very important and relevant cause: the one of anti-bullying.

"I really felt united with the school and I felt like we were wearing our shirts for a good cause. It was really nice to see so many of the students and staff participating in this event," said Markus Fares, a Secondary V student that attends Royal West Academy.

Many other schools also embarked on the journey of bringing awareness and ending bullying by having their own Pink Shirt Day. Although not all of the days that are dedicated to anti-bullying took place on November 19, the support and unity was still present and we love it!

Pink Shirt Day does the very important job of drawing awareness to the deplorable but unfortunately relevant issue of bullying that takes place in certain lives. This

event keeps RWA students and staff members mindful and supportive to the victims of bullying. This eye-opening day has a positive impact that is felt throughout the entire school and community. Hopefully the amazing support that Royal West Academy has shown towards anti-bullying continues for years to come, having its positivity spread globally.

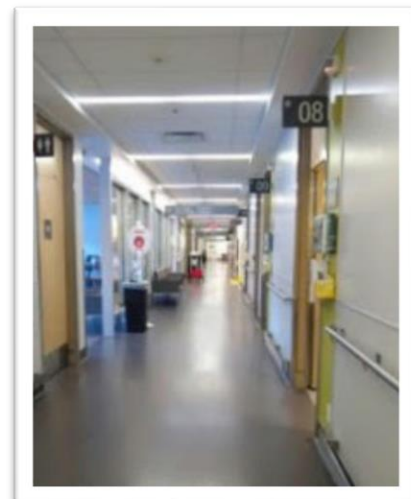
Hospital Opportunity For Teens

By Simon Radhakrishna

The Hospital Opportunity Program for Students (otherwise known as HOPS), is a program for Secondary V students at Royal West Academy as well as at other schools that takes place at the Jewish General Hospital. Its goal is to offer an observational experience that allows students to see how a hospital runs. The program is composed of two main parts: weekly rotations and evening lectures.

Students participate in 10 rotations during a twelve-week program in which they shadow a doctor or nurse in a wide variety of clinical roles for a morning or an afternoon. For example, I have been in the emergency unit and I will be in the dental clinic on February 10. These sessions allow us to not only understand how the hospital works, but also to get a sense of the departments we are most interested in. Mia Moghrabi, a Secondary V student here at RWA, enjoys this experience as "you never know what kind of events you're going to witness." Each student receives his or her own schedule and they are the only HOPS student for the rotation.

Four evening lectures take place at which doctors and other health care professionals give talks regarding their careers and experiences. On November 18, Dr. Jonathan Wyse, a gastroenterologist, talked to us about life as a doctor and his path through medical school. He helped us understand the benefits and downsides of becoming a healthcare professional. The



evening lectures are open to not only HOPS students, but also friends and family.

Students apply for HOPS in September. They must have high grades and have to go through two interviews—one at the school and one at the EMSB—before acceptance. This year, they accepted a total of six RWA students into the program.

HOPS allows for learning outside of school and is an experience I have very much enjoyed so far!

Mackay Centre: An Enriching Experience

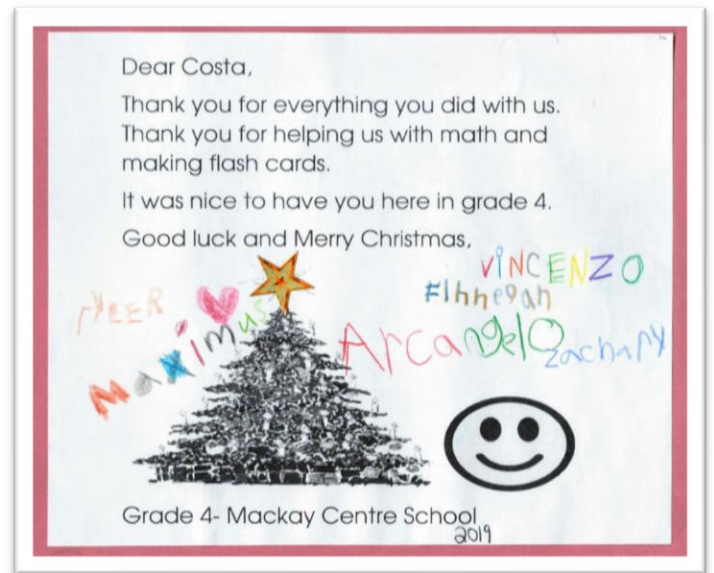
By Costa Mandelos



Encouraged by others who volunteered at the Mackay Centre School in previous years, this year, I applied and got selected to devote my Tuesday mornings to helping kids. The Mackay Centre is a school for children with physical or learning disabilities and has a modified curriculum to facilitate learning and help students achieve their goals. After completing an interview with Ms. S. Di Pietro, she selected fourteen Royal West Academy students to volunteer at the Mackay Centre, seven for the fall term and seven for the winter term.

On the first day, we toured the facility: the swimming pool, the gym, and all the classrooms. I was given Ms. Glenna's fourth-grade class. For the following seven Tuesdays, I helped children with their school work. For math, we started with addition and subtraction, and by late November, Ms. Glenna and I began to teach them multiplication. For social studies, we made a map of the world and explained to them how in different countries there are kids who are less fortunate, and their journey to school is much more complicated than taking a school bus. The students were shocked when they heard that children in Gulu, China, have to walk along a one-foot wide cliff edge to get to their elementary school.

My favourite part of the day was when I read to the students two stories by Robert Munsch. This brought back memories of my elementary school rainy days when the rain monitor would read a story to the class. I enjoyed grabbing their undivided attention and having them laugh out loud to the punch lines. At these times, I developed my patience skills when attempting to direct the class back to their seats and focus on their studies.



I want to thank Ms. Di Pietro at Royal West Academy and the staff at the Mackay Centre for making this rewarding experience possible. It was a two-sided exchange where the children felt a big brother relationship while I made great memories and refined essential skills. I highly recommend everyone to take part in this program.

The Fantastic Foundation

By Kevin Adams

Royal West Academy is a relatively new school that started out in the 1980s, but the building itself is much older than that. Originally constructed in 1931, New Montreal West High School (predecessor to RWA) and its features were well ahead of its time. From a beautiful interior to superb laboratories and well-equipped classrooms, New Montreal West High School was the place to be.

While the building was top of the line in 1931, it was getting old, and like most things that age it had to be updated, particularly the (boys) gym and the auditorium. When a group of teachers first formally addressed this need to renovate/innovate parts of the school in 1996, RWA called for someone to oversee the changes. The following summer, the Royal West Academy Foundation (RWAf) was created and has since been organizing these tasks.

The first and most important thing to understand about The Foundation, is that all of the parents and alumni involved are volunteers! All the incredible work that they've done in the past couple decades completely out

of the goodness of their hearts and their dedication to our school.

This year the RWAF is made of up 18 members, and it is led by president Mr. Mitchell White. It's amazing how much such a small group has done for those of us at RWA. In 2008, the beautiful new gym was built, and it exceeded expectations. For a few years now they have been planning and fundraising for the biggest project so far: the creation of the Royal West Academy Performing Arts Centre (PAC).

The PAC (not an official acronym, just more convenient) will be host to many exciting changes and upgrades. The loud fan at the top of the auditorium will most likely be the first to go, with an overhaul to the current air conditioning. There will also be a fair amount of theatrical changes, such as a better drop-down wall, improved curtains, and a proper place for blackout curtains. This new auditorium will also include overhead microphones to improve band performances and acoustic paneling for overall sound improvement. The balcony seating will also be ameliorated, and there will potentially be fixed retractable seating in the general area of the PAC. Some other possible changes will include: mounted plaques to commemorate the many donors who helped fund the creation of the PAC and an elevator to increase accessibility to the school as well as turning the girls gym (behind the auditorium) into classrooms.

This new auditorium is set to begin construction in the summer of 2020, and should be finished for the 2020–2021 school year!

If you want to invest your time into something special, check out the RWAF website at <https://rwaf.ca/>.

John Grant Volunteering

By Andrea Lian

Every Monday, four students from Royal West Academy, including myself, go to John Grant High School to spend time with the students and help the teachers. John Grant High School is a high school for students who have special needs and struggle with school academically. It welcomes students of all ages with different learning difficulties.

On our first day, we were given a tour of the school and students from each class greeted us as we visited the school. My first impression was that the students and

staff were super friendly and welcoming. Students said hi to me and asked for my name, they also asked how my weekend went. I was placed with a French class and the students were learning about the fundamental rules of the French language.

Every week, we go to our assigned class to help students with their class work and help them develop their social skills by engaging in conversations with them. For example, I show the students how to use a bilingual dictionary and how to write proper sentences. It is especially rewarding when the students remember what we did last time and apply their new knowledge to the classwork.

I asked the guidance counsellor at John Grant, Ms. T. James, for her opinion of the students of Royal West Academy. She describes the students of Royal West Academy as “dedicated, helpful, and enthusiastic.” She elaborated by saying, “[the] program is a great collaboration between John Grant and Royal West where both groups of students gain from the experience. The John Grant students look forward to having the Royal West students volunteer at John Grant yearly.”

I am happy that I took this opportunity to spend time with students with special needs because it taught me how to interact with individuals who express themselves differently and to be more patient. John Grant is one of the many opportunities Royal West Academy offers students to get involved with the community—others include Mackay Centre School and helping out the town of Montreal West. These volunteering programs allow students to develop their interpersonal skills and gain a better understanding of how to deal with different types of people.



A Small Effort That Can Leave A Huge Impact

By Matthew Vamvakas

It's almost that time of the year again! Winter is coming to an end along with all the trash and dirt accumulated. This also means the start of the annual Spring Cleaning extracurricular activity held by Mr. A. Diacoumacos. It is the perfect opportunity to get a full credit while enjoying the sun and helping out the Montreal West community!

Royal West Academy sits in the scenic Montreal West area surrounded by beautiful parks and trees. Students find themselves in these areas every day and unfortunately litter accumulates. This extracurricular activity is set on maintaining a clean community and minimizing as much trash as possible. Students are responsible for different areas surrounding the school and neighbourhood. This lets the community of Montreal West understand our school's active participation in maintaining a clean environment.

Famous climate change activist Greta Thunberg said, "You are never too small to make a difference." This completely resonates with our goal. It installs a sense of environmental consciousness for students all across the school. Some may think that this has no effect on the environment, but it sets a great example. It is students who will grow up to be professionals carrying out decisions that will impact it. Greta Thunberg also said, "Imagine what we could all do together if we really wanted to." Picture every school in the world participating in an activity like this one. It requires no money and only the helping hands of students. Think about what an enormous difference we teenagers can make!

This rewarding extracurricular activity is offered in the month of May—expect sign-up sheets outside Mr. Diacoumacos' room some time in April. Don't miss out on this opportunity to help the community and receive a credit!

Senior Robotics Club

By Trevor Kirsch

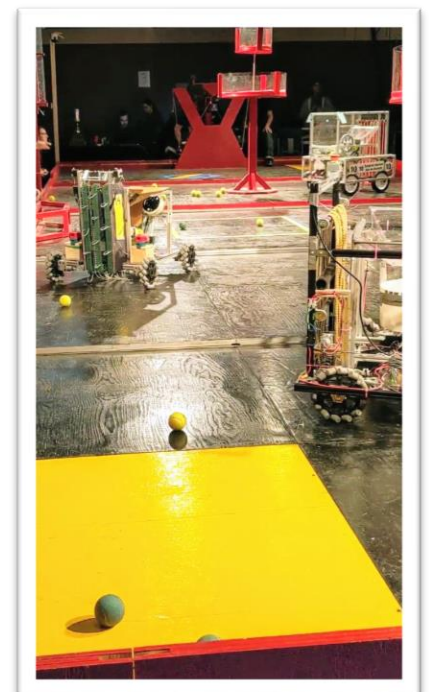
Royal West Academy offers some incredible extracurricular activities, but one that stands out is the Senior Robotics Club. Every year, this remarkable activity is run by Mr. S. Nemeth for Secondary III to V. He helps prepare the participating students for the CRC

Robotics competition; a big event that encompasses many schools around Montreal. This competition happens annually, sometime around the end of January and the beginning of February. This year the competition will take place at Vanier College, and will last three days.

The students begin preparing at the end of October following the release of the official rules up until the actual day of the event. The competition has a variety of sub-competitions which all have their own award categories. These include the main competition, kiosk design, programming, and quite a few more. The club is divided into smaller teams who work on each of these tasks individually. Meetings take place every Wednesday after school for two hours.

The main competition changes every year. Last year, the goal was to build a robot that could pick up and then launch tennis balls into containers, and drive up and down steps. This time, the objective is to get the most bean bags into your team's bin. Both teams have a bin that rests on one end of a conveyor belt. Bean bags are periodically dropped on to the conveyor belt whose direction and speed are determined by the different tasks the robot can complete.

The sub-competitions are equally important to the main one. The kiosk is a 12 ft. by 12 ft. box with walls that are painted according to a theme chosen the year prior. The kiosk is where the robot is worked on, it contains all the tools and students' belongings. The programming competition tests the coding skills of the students who decide to participate. The website and the video are additional sub-competitions which are designed to represent our school using the aforementioned theme. These parts of the competition are judged for awards given at



the end of the competition.

Students have plenty of fun while learning valuable skills and meeting new people in Senior Robotics. I've been in the club for the past three years, and it has taught me a lot about working with a team and the challenges you can face during competitions. Another member, Simon Radhakrishna, has also returned every year since Secondary III. I asked him about his experience in robotics. "Robotics allows me to develop my team working skills as well as my problem-solving skills," he says.

Overall, this extracurricular activity is a great way to develop new skills while having an incredible time.

Stress Relief Care Package

By Antoine Parise

During the last week of January, the students of Royal West Academy were feeling the pressure! Everyone was preparing for their exams and most of us were focused on our studying. Thankfully, the Mental Health Awareness Club at RWA had our backs. The students in charge of the club set up a fantastic "stress relief package" to help everyone relax before the week's exams. The fun packages had a stress ball, some encouraging memes, relaxing tea, and a fortune cookie with some homemade fortunes. Everything was planned and designed by the members of the club: Keva Richter, Meghan Knott, Audrey Zoso, and Sofia McVetty. According to Ms. R. Klissouris, one of our school's guidance counselors, the members of the club were the ones to come up with the idea and put everything together.

The packages were a smash hit. When the club members handed them out during recess and lunch, a massive crowd of excited students lined up for their own little bit of stress relief. Those who organized the event were really happy with how it turned out. I spoke to my friend Keva and she had this to say, "Although we don't really know how these packages impacted every individual, we managed to put a smile on quite a couple of faces and that's what matters." Really, I don't think anyone could have said it better.

It's nice gestures like this that really foster the sense of community we have at Royal West Academy and I can't wait to see what the Mental Health Club has in mind for the rest of the year.

Grads in the Clouds

By Julian Cerminara



Are you ready for Prom 2020? It will be a very memorable night! Many people commonly mistake Grad Committee with Student Life Association or even the yearbook committee, thinking we plan all events. In Grad Committee, we are only responsible for the graduation aspect of our last year at Royal West Academy. Our major tasks are planning the prom, helping fundraise, and designing the graduation apparel.

I decided to partake in Grad Committee with many of my friends because we were all determined to make this prom one to remember.

Up until now everything has gone smoothly. We've had many different ways of raising money for our prom so far, like selling goodies in the foyer during lunch. We have bake sales once a month which include Krispy Kreme donuts and cookies. We have raised a fair amount selling these treats, but we had to make more money. A prom ticket costs a total of \$160 for each student. To help pay for them, we decided to order chocolates for the graduates to sell. For every box sold, a little portion of their prom ticket cost will be reduced. Therefore, the more boxes a student sells the cheaper their prom ticket will be.

The venue chosen for this year's prom will be held at Le Crystal. Coming up with a theme for prom is a very important aspect, so we took this very seriously. We will be doing a Cloud 9 theme, therefore there will be a lot of white everywhere and clouds will be put up on the walls. It will look very artistically pleasing and it will be a night to remember.

I am glad to say that if things continue how they are going, Prom 2020 will be a huge success this year!

Winter Carnival

By Danaelle Sarah Napoléon

Winter Carnival: the day of amusement, of happiness, and filled with entertainment. Every year at Royal West Academy, a winter carnival takes place at the end of January. Activities such as sugar shack, tubing, skiing, hockey, snowshoeing, and in-school activities (that take place inside the school) are the options students have for Winter Carnival.





According to Mr. J. Zigby, the organizer of Winter Carnival day, a total of 630 students participated in the Winter Carnival activities. 155 participated in skiing, 320 participated in tubing, 65 participated in sugar shack, 35 participated in hockey, 5 participated in snowshoeing, and 70 students participated in in-school activities.

Mr. Zigby had said the goal and the purpose of having an annual winter carnival was “to reduce anxiety, prior to exams, and increase school spirit.” As an RWA student who has participated in the Winter Carnival activities for three years now, I can agree with Mr. Zigby that participating in a Winter Carnival activity really does help ease my stress for exams.

It has also been an enjoyable experience getting to do the activities and experiencing them with friends. “Most students come back extremely happy to have enjoyed the day with their friends,” said Mr. Zigby.

If you are feeling stressed about upcoming exams or you just simply want to have a day of fun and laughs, I absolutely recommend, if you are an RWA student, to join an activity in next year’s Winter Carnival.

Reach For The Top

By Jaden Hum

BUZZ!

Everyone hits their buzzers, trying to get their answers in before anyone else. In the end, only one can prevail, and it’s Jesse: “The 2000 Olympics were in Sydney!”

Reach for the Top is an activity that takes place every Tuesday and Friday during lunch. It’s a fun and educational environment where students put their general knowledge to the test. A potpourri of questions is asked, ranging from school curriculum to pop culture. Each participant has a buzzer with which they need to be the first one to press to answer the question. Speed

is key. Each year, there’s a Reach for the Top competition hosted at Marianopolis College involving many different high schools from Montreal, including our Royal West Academy. There, the school team goes against other schools.

Yimaj Baharun, a member since 2016, says that being on the team isn’t as easy as it may seem, “One has to be well-read to be on the team. You can’t just be a riffraff who watches *Jeopardy!* once in a blue moon and join. It takes memorization and constant searching for knowledge to be able to become a valuable member of the team. I do online quizzes on all sorts of topics whenever I can—pair that with reading and voilà.”

During competitions, when you’re on a team, there could be disputes as to what the answer is. This is where trust and communication play a significant factor. You need to learn how to consider the input of your teammates before impulsively pressing the buzzer—every point matters.

Last year, the Royal West Academy team, unfortunately, did not live up to expectations after not making the Provincial finals. However, this year they wish to finish the job and represent Quebec in the National tournament in Toronto. With new additions to the team, this may very well be a reality.

SHRUBS

By Sophia Clifton-Harting

The path to an even greener Royal West Academy

Throughout the school year, an extra-curricular activity (ECA) called Project SHRUBS has actively been helping create a greener environment for the students at school. SHRUBS is an environmental club that aims at exposing students to a more environmentally friendly school setting and teaching them the responsibility of taking care of plants.

Throughout the year, students have made time after school or during lunch to help paint planter pots and then plant seedlings. Over 50 pots had to be painted and each showcases the creativity of students at Royal West Academy. However, that also meant that there was a lot to be planted! Students got their hands dirty as they planted homes for little seedlings. After planting, unfortunately some plants did not successfully grow—however, after being replanted, most plants flourished.



To help us out, the Royal West Academy guidance counselor Ms. C. Schreiber and the Mental Health Awareness Committee brought in a special guest speaker: Ms. Dawn Cruchet! An RWA alumnus and an expert in the field of grief counseling, Ms. Cruchet headed a workshop on November 29. It was a pedagogical day well spent!

The main topics that were discussed included how grief manifests itself and how to help a loved one deal with grief. These topics are hardly ever discussed, so having an expert in the field educate us on common misconceptions and lead a discussion was very helpful and refreshing.

First of all, Ms. Cruchet wanted to make one thing very clear.

“Grief is individual,” Ms. Cruchet said. “There is no right way to grieve.”

Then we discussed how we can deal with loss. For example, doing physical activity and expressing yourself by writing poetry can help.

But who is taking care of all these plants? Most homerooms at school have students assigned to taking care of one or multiple plants. By watering the plants periodically and making sure they have enough sunlight to grow, students learn how to be responsible.

The ECA is run by two Secondary V students, Hajeong Seo and Sophia Clifton-Harting as well as a wonderful teacher, Ms. Belina. The club began over the summer of 2019 and was implemented at school in September. Homerooms have an assortment of plants including chamomile, baby blues, marigolds, and lettuce. Hajeong said she “hopes that SHRUBS will carry through into the next school year,” thus continuing to make Royal West Academy an even greener school!

Grief Counselor Visit

By Vanessa Lee

There are many emotional issues that confront people, including ones that people may be uncomfortable discussing. Unfortunately, as a result, they then become buried and never properly discussed. However, a group of teens, mostly from Ms. D. Colannino’s psychology class, decided to breach one of the most uncomfortable topics in today’s society: grief.

After Ms. Cruchet left, the students went to the art room to create art that would capture how we feel about grief and the discussion in general. The art will be displayed throughout the school.

I personally found this seminar very informative and interesting. It brought a new perspective to this topic, students were able to let out any feelings of loss and sadness they were feeling, and they received tips on how to cope with it. It was perfectly timed, too—the holidays are always the hardest time after losing somebody.

It was a great seminar and Ms. Cruchet was an amazing guest speaker! I hope to see more seminars like this happen in the future.



Bantam Boys Volleyball

By Sahra Zimmer



Second Place!

Royal West Academy offers many sports and clubs to be a part of, including volleyball. The bantam boys volleyball team have had an incredible season, coming in second place in the GMAA season and ninth in the provincial championships! The team has students ranging from Secondary II to Secondary III, with two former RWA volleyball players coaching them. Zoe Small and Grace Martin-Chang, two students in Secondary IV, have coached them with the help of Ms. P. Tsagaroulis, the teacher supervisor. Says Zoe, "I'm so lucky to have been able to start this team last year and be able to continue coaching them this year as well. I'm so happy I could bring my favourite sport into the lives of so many students at Royal West Academy."

The volleyball team has worked incredibly hard for their victories. During the fall season, which was from last September to November, the players had around three practices and one game every week. The team grew incredibly close, which is very nice, as kids in different grades who would have never spoken became really good friends.

The team played in the GMAA league against all different high schools. They made it to the finals against Loyola High School, but unfortunately lost. However, they came in second place, which is still amazing. The bantam boys also competed in a tournament that took place in Sherbrooke. The tournament was a provincial championship, and the boys came in ninth place, which is a huge victory.

Overall, the bantam boys volleyball team had an amazing season, with the coaching of Zoe and Grace, and with the help of Ms. Tsagaroulis. Their success in



the GMAA league and provincials was unbelievable, and I'm sure they will continue to succeed in the years to come. Go Wildcats!

Midget Girls Basketball Team

By Chiara Morsa



The Royal West Academy midget girls basketball team went through many obstacles before the beginning of their playing season. The team was to be coached initially by Ms. A. Holloway, but she subsequently left our school. So Brian Ostroff, a parent of two RWA students, took on the job to become coach to this team of young girls.

On November 26, I sat down with Mr. Ostroff in the new gym of RWA where I could tell he was prepared to connect with each individual student to create a hard working team. Mr. Ostroff was ready to become a new role model these girls could look up to in sports, saying, "I was very excited to come out and coach the first game and see the kids." At times it can be slightly difficult to manage the team when having to travel for work, but he has planned to be there for the majority of the girls' games and practices.

Mr. Ostroff answered my interview questions about his past coaching experiences, telling me about his time as a coach for baseball during camp as well as stepping in at Royal Vale School to coach basketball a couple of times. Those experiences made him want to be able to coach our midget girls basketball team, not only to help inspire his daughters Londynn and Aurora Ostroff, but also the other 13 players.

I finished off my interview by asking Mr. Ostroff what his goal was for this year's basketball season. He went on to say, "It would be nice to have a competitive team."



But for me it's not so much about the winning as much as it is seeing the team improve. Seeing the team be the best team they can be."

On December 2, when I watched the RWA midget girls basketball team play The Study and win the game, I witnessed Brian Ostroff become the girls' new leader of the team as he pushed them to work as hard as they could and have as much fun as possible.

Golf Tournament

By Justin Chhabra

Or How I Golfed With My Brother's Orthodontist's Son

On September 25, I drove up to the Caughnawaga golf course with Ryan McGibbon, Tyller Niiya, and Tyller's grandfather for the official GMAA golf tournament. When we arrived, Tyller's grandfather wished us good luck and we met up with Ben Dubuc-Doyle and Mr. R. Aiken. Our initial reactions to the course were all pretty similar; Ryan described it well by saying the course was, "Pretty simple looking with some nice greenery, but long."

We had signed up for the best ball tournament, which was the less competitive of the two formats offered. We spent a bit of time at the driving range warming up with various golf clubs and then were split into our different groups. We all were assigned to go first or second on one of the eighteen holes. I approached hole 13 and was presented with my group. We were a smaller group of only three people. It was me, a boy from Kuper Academy named Alessandro (who I later learned was my brother's orthodontist's son) and a girl from Sacred Heart School named Kassandra. Our teacher advisor was the spiritual animator at West Island College.

We all hit our first shots and began to quickly learn that we were not the greatest group of golfers. We were hockey and football players that had played golf for fun every once in a while. As the round went on, we continued to improve in our own way while also encouraging each other. Considering we had five hours together, we were able to talk about a lot of different interesting topics like how many siblings we have all the way to what we want to do later in our lives.

We ended up finishing the round with score of 106 strokes over 18 holes. Our score was not very good but to us it didn't really matter because we had such a

fun time playing. However, that doesn't mean I didn't get a few jokes thrown at me by my friends for having almost 30 more strokes than their group.

Outdoor Track

By Vincent Heneault

Why should you join?

Every year, at Royal West Academy there's an outdoor track team that brings fun and competitiveness into one sport. It starts around the end of March and the competitions are in May. In outdoor track there's many different events: throwing events, jumping events, and running events. So there are plenty of different options for all types of people. Outdoor track is a great environment and a judge-free place. I joined outdoor track last year and I found events that suited my strengths as a runner and pushed myself to the best of my abilities. This team also helped me make new friends in different grades that I would never have talked to outside of this club.

To give you another perspective of why you should join outdoor track I interviewed the track coach last year who will also be the coach this year, Ms. S. Di Pietro. She mentioned that 30 to 35 students joined outdoor track last year and how she's aiming for the same amount (or more of course) this year. Ms. Di Pietro is a dedicated coach since she herself did track when she was in high school and loved it so much she's paying it forward, hoping everyone has a great time. I asked her why people should join track, and she said it's to keep in shape and stay healthy while having fun and enjoying time with friends.



I also interviewed a student who was part of outdoor track last year, Emma Rhodes. I asked her what she thought the goal of track was and she said, "To help you stay fit during the school year while also connecting with new people and obtaining your personal best." I also asked her what the competitions were like and she replied, "They're fun but also competitive. You were faced against different schools and even though medals are individual, each school fights for the banner which brings pride and joy to your school."

Outdoor track is really one of the best clubs to join if you are looking to stay fit and to make new friends.

The Governing Board Report

By Ms. Jacqueline Stein-Elman, Vice Chair

Royal West Academy's third Governing Board meeting for this academic year was held on January 9. The meeting kicked off with the introduction of Ms. C. Madden, our new interim vice-principal.

Highlights of the meeting include:

- Ms. C. Tannous providing details on the sexuality education mandate, including when a parent can request an exemption—mainly, if they believe there will be psychological harm or infringement on the Human Rights charter if their child participates. If so, the parent must fill out the online form on the EMSB website and provide supporting documents to request an exemption. A letter has been sent out to parents with themes by grade. The main change was who was teaching each grade.
- Approval of the Grilles Matières—there were no changes from last year.
- A budget update was discussed as well as budget priorities for the next academic year.
- A date change for the Governing Board meeting in April was confirmed from the 27th to the 15th.
- Finally, the letter to the EMSB regarding Criteria for Selection of Principal for the 2020–2021 academic year was reviewed and approved by the Board.

Meetings take place in the school library at 7 PM—all are welcome. Hope to see you at our next meeting on February 24, 2020. In case you miss us, the minutes are posted on the Royal West Academy website.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Feb 4–7	Sec II trip: Stoneham QC
Feb 4–7	Sec V trip: New York NY
February 10	RWA Foundation meeting @ 7 PM
February 11	Home & School meeting @ 7:30 PM
February 12	Salon des inventions
February 13	Science Fair
February 14	Pedagogical Day
Feb 17–20	MindPOP Français
February 24	Governing Board meeting @ 7 PM

LOST AND FOUND POLICY

Please be advised that the Lost and Found boxes are cleaned out on the 15th of each month. While labeled items are returned to their owners, several bags of unclaimed unlabeled items are removed and donated to charity every month. So if you are looking for lost items, make sure to look for them before the 15th!

The Lost and Found bins are located in three areas at Royal West Academy:

- outside the new gym
- outside the guidance office
- in the main office under the teachers' mailboxes

In the meantime, please label all your belongings!

RWA



News

Editor

Assistant Editor

Junior Assistant Editor

Junior Assistant Editor

Staff Advisor

Ronald Pau (RWA alumni parent)

Daniela MacLean (Sec V student)

Chiara Morsa (Sec IV student)

Jena Price (Sec IV student)

Christy Tannous (Vice-Principal)

RWA News is published during the academic year (from September to May) on the Royal West Academy website at www.royalwestacademy.com. Articles, comments, and suggestions may be directed to the editor at rwanews@gmail.com.

