



Varsity Women's Volleyball celebrates their State Championship 3-0 win against Chelsea Academy on Saturday in Richmond. (More on pg. 2)

THE NEWSLETTER OF  
NEW COVENANT SCHOOLS

# QUID NOVI

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## BLOOMING IN THE MARKETPLACE: DON'T PICK THE BUD

by Erin H. Uminn, School of Rhetoric Principal

When my oldest daughter was in kindergarten, we sent her to our local public school, as it was the most economic option for us at the time. We reasoned that we could adjust her school in a few years, as we believed that learning to read and count at a public school could not be very different from other options. As she was memorizing her sight words and bringing home books to read to us, my husband and I would listen to her newly budding efforts to decipher simple sentences. One evening, she was proudly plugging along before coming to a word she did not know. I encouraged her, "Okay, let's sound it out." She looked up at me with tears in

her eyes and stated, "I don't know what you mean!" When I started modeling how to sound each letter, she confusedly said that this was not how the class read at school. So, I started volunteering my time leading reading groups at the school and saw the whole-word memorization method firsthand. I promptly bought a simple phonics book and taught my daughter how to read. In a short amount of time, she had the tools to encounter complex words and sentences, and she matriculated into New Covenant Schools. Within two years, our clarity about curriculum and educational context had shifted in our home. One was not like the other.

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### WHAT'S NEW?

#### Men's Retreat: Registration Is Closing Tomorrow!

The annual Men's Retreat will be held this weekend, November 14 and 15.

**Headmaster Heaton** and a committee of men volunteers are looking forward to welcoming dads at Bold Branch Farm in Bedford. The group will be hearing from guest speakers **Thomas Fickley** and **Mark Perkins** of St. Dunstan's Academy in Nelson County who will share how to grow strong men through the common arts. Food for the weekend will be from the grill and centered around the theme "Swine and Sip." The cost is \$33 for Friday only or \$38 for both days.

**Registration will close tomorrow morning November 11 at 8:00am.** Sign up today if you would still like to attend: [bit.ly/mens\\_retreat2025](https://bit.ly/mens_retreat2025). Space is limited. An email with directions and schedule will be sent on Wednesday.



THINK. LEARN. LOVE. LIVE.

# H O N O R A R I A

## GRYPHON VOLLEYBALL TAKES STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

by John Maynard, Athletic Director

New Covenant Varsity Women's Volleyball captured the VISAA Division III State Championship on Saturday, defeating the Chelsea Academy Knights out of Front Royal, VA. This marks the third VISAA State Championship for New Covenant athletics and the first Women's Championship.

Our team went into the playoffs ranked #2 and dominated the Quarterfinal and Semifinal Games for a chance to meet Chelsea Academy, the #1-ranked team in the state. Going into the game, Chelsea had a record of 16-6. Its only defeats had been at the hands of Division I and II powerhouses. The Knights were playing in their third consecutive state championship match and were the heavy favorites.

After a tense back-and-forth first set, New Covenant came out on top 26-24. The Gryphons were never truly threatened again. It was a convincing and well-deserved victory for a group of women who set this goal last spring and have worked towards it for the last eight months.

Leading up to the championship, New Covenant hosted not one, but two VISAA State Semifinals this

past Thursday. Not only was the volleyball team taking on Richmond Christian, but the men's soccer team was hosting Grace Christian School for a chance to go the State Championship. Both teams emerged victorious in what was a wildly successful and fun night for the Gryphons that saw hundreds of parents, students, and alumni visit campus for the two events.

Attention now moves to the soccer team (#3-ranked) who plays today at 2:30pm at City Stadium in Richmond against Veritas School (#1-ranked) for a chance at their own State Championship. These boys not only excel at their sport but also in their academics as five of the players are finalists in this year's Poetry Recital. The recital has been rescheduled to tomorrow evening in order that these athletes may participate in both events.

Good luck to the soccer team and a huge congratulations to the volleyball team on bringing home a championship for themselves and for New Covenant.

*Sophomore Ava Boettger and team displayed outstanding, winning form all year.*



FUNDRAISING REPORT			
	GOAL	RECEIVED	
Annual Fund	\$300,000	\$220,030	
General Scholarship	\$10,000	\$2,580	
Scholarship Foundation	\$300,000	Pledged	\$263,700
		Received	\$188,242

Please consider New Covenant Schools in your giving. All gifts are tax-deductible to the extent that the law provides. Donations may be given through cash, check, stock transfers, or IRA distributions. Contact **Dayna Renalds** in the Development Office for more information.

# E T C E T E R A

## EVERYONE

### SOR POETRY RECITAL CHANGE

Due to the Varsity Men's Soccer state championship game on Monday, the SOR Poetry Recital has been moved to **Tuesday, November 11**. Come enjoy hot chocolate, poetry, and a warm fire at the Poetry Recital in the courtyard at 7:00pm. All are welcome to attend.

### RED, WHITE, AND BLUE DAY

In honor of Veterans' Day, all Grammar and Middle School students may wear red, white, and blue tops, jeans, and close-toed shoes on **Tuesday, November 11**.

### MS PLAY AUDITIONS

Auditions for 5/6 grade will be **Tuesday, December 2**. Auditions for 7/8 grade will be **Friday, December 5**. Both auditions will be from 3:00-4:30pm in the Chapel. These auditions for *Beauty and the Beast* and *Little Mermaid* will include acting and singing. Students should prepare for the singing portion of the audition by practicing "Do You Wanna Build a Snow Man?" from *Frozen* and "A Million Dreams" from the *Greatest Showman*. For any questions, contact **Ethan Roberts**, [eroberts@newcovenantschools.org](mailto:eroberts@newcovenantschools.org).

### ALUMNI SOCCER GAME

NCS Alumni and their families are invited to join us on **Friday, November 28 at 4:00pm** for an afternoon of soccer, food and reconnecting with friends. **Michael Minnick** (Class of 2020) will be coordinating this event. If you have questions, please email him at [michael.minnick01@outlook.com](mailto:michael.minnick01@outlook.com). For planning purposes, we ask you to RSVP by using this link: [bit.ly/NCSAlumni2025](https://bit.ly/NCSAlumni2025).

### 5/6 GRADE CHRISTMAS CONCERT

Join us on **Monday, December 8** at 9:00am to hear our 5th and 6th grade choir, band and orchestra perform their Christmas concert.

### TUITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TAP)

The tuition assistance program (TAP) for 2026-27 school year is accepting applications through **January 15, 2026**. For more details, refer to the email sent **Monday, October 27** from **Tiffany Fulcher**.

### SOR DIVE TRIP 2027

Join us on **Monday, November 17** at 5:30pm for more information on the 2027 Marine Science Trip. Register here: [bit.ly/SORdive2027](https://bit.ly/SORdive2027).

### MOMS IN PRAYER

Moms in Prayer will not be meeting **Wednesday, November 12**.

### ATHLETIC AWARDS

Fall athletic awards for the School of Rhetoric will be presented **Wednesday, November 12 from 12:40-1:30pm** in the Workman Field House. Parents are welcome to attend.

### WINTER UNIFORM CLARIFICATION

For young women: leggings are allowed, but should meet the socks, fit like tights (not sweatpants) and match the uniform. No wild and crazy colors—stick with blue, black, white or light grey. Leg warmers are not allowed. On days when the forecast high temperature is 40 degrees or below, young women may wear Flynn & O'Hara uniform slacks, even on dress day, with their normal dress day tops. For young men and women: long-sleeved t-shirts may be worn under long-sleeved shirts for extra warmth. If the t-shirt is white or navy or light grey, it may be worn under a

short-sleeved shirt as well. You may not wear a hoodie under your polo nor a shirt with writing on the sleeves.

### TEACHERS' FAVORITES

Each year faculty and staff fill out a favorites sheet listing interests, hobbies, favorite foods, etc. If you would like a copy of a teacher's favorites list, please check the resource documents section of the app, or stop by the lobby desk and ask to see the Favorites Book.

### PROGRESS REPORTS

Progress reports will be sent via email on **Thursday, November 13**.

### THANKSGIVING BREAK

School will break for Thanksgiving from **Monday, November 24 – Friday, November 28**. Students return on Monday, December 1.

## GRAMMAR SCHOOL

### THANKSGIVING DRESS DAY

On **Friday, November 21**, Grammar School students are invited to dress as pilgrims or Indians in lieu of the regular Friday uniform. Students should still wear close-toed athletic shoes for PE, recess, and safety purposes.

## MIDDLE SCHOOL

### 8TH GRADE PARENT BREAKFAST

Parents with a student rising to 9th grade for the 2026-27 school year are invited to join **Dr. Erin Uminn** and **Mrs. Lauren Helm** for breakfast on **Friday, November 14 from 8:00-9:00am**. Come and hear about what awaits your student in 9th grade and beyond. Please email your RSVP to **Eliza Olson** at [eolson@newcovenantschools.org](mailto:eolson@newcovenantschools.org).



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In a recent 2025 *Classical Difference* [article](#), Dr. Eliot Grasso, Vice President of Gutenberg College, discusses important considerations regarding student pathways in education. Grasso presents several worthy questions to ask when considering whether a student should go to college. Some of these questions include: What do employers value most in employees? Are college degrees worth the cost when sociologists predict that 85% of the jobs in 2030 do not yet exist? Are skills more valuable than credentials? These are practical and existential questions as the cost of college continues to rise and the marketplace adapts to new and changing technology, population, and economies. Grasso offers a humane approach to these questions: employers and colleges continue to value ethical judgement, critical thinking, communication, applied knowledge, and a capacity for continued learning. When I read Dr. Grasso's list, I could not help but think of our Portrait of the Graduate. The embodied virtue of a student is born out of a communal educational experience, not a purely pragmatic one.

Andrew Greeley, professor of social science at the University of Chicago, posits that an educational community is just as important as the selected curriculum, and both work in tandem. I would argue that whole-word memorization is less effective than phonics instruction when teaching young children to read, as in my daughter's case. This also applies to learning complex topics, such as chemistry, Latin, and Aquinas. At New Covenant the learning environment *is part of the curriculum*. Requiring a student to read through hundreds of pages of Homer's *Odyssey* to take a multiple-choice test on a computer screen, or to translate 18 lines of Virgil daily to pass the AP exam, is quite a different education than that

of the student who sits among peers to read Odysseus' adventures and consider the deep wisdom therein, dialoging with a teacher as a guide. Wisdom is born out of specific and correct knowledge, but it also must be cultivated in a nutrient-rich setting.

One current trend in the academic landscape is acceleration, return on investment, and a great "reach down" by colleges to recruit students early in their teenage years. Colleges are no longer interested in our graduates only; they are seeking to enroll our freshmen and sophomores. As a secondary educator I find this problematic for two reasons.

First, students in the grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric years need age-appropriate instruction, predictability, and support. They are in the throes of human development and the way that they intake information, experience learning, and participate in their studies should be tailored to their developmental needs.

Second, there is a wide range of variance in the quality of instruction and design of course material marketed as college-level to high school students. The bloom in the final years of the School of Rhetoric is a direct result of learning in the greenhouse, not to be plucked or accelerated too early.

When I look at the move toward high school recruitment, I stop to hit pause. New Covenant students stand uniquely positioned in a vast sea of national grade inflation and a dizzying spread of college course options, exams, and extra-curricular activities. This isn't just my bias—nearly 20 colleges have been on our campus *this fall* to meet our students, view our program, and tour our facilities. These colleges range from highly selective to open admission, and all hear about our graduates' ability to discuss big ideas, to disagree respectfully but confidently,

to welcome and adapt to feedback, to write and orally defend positions, and to communicate effectively in a variety of contexts, all of which they tell our staff is of high value. Most importantly, our students are developing into skilled and virtuous persons in a marketplace that will greatly treasure them, due not only to what information they are exposed to, but how they are exposed to it.

Parents who are considering a wide variety of new choices in education are well-served by taking a close look at the promise of a complete classical, Christian curriculum. Financial incentives are a powerful motivator for parents who pay tuition bills, but curricular and programmatic outcomes are a far more important metric when considering the formation of young, developing student. Consider the bloom in the School of Rhetoric, and do not be tempted to pick the bud.



## QUID NOVI

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CLASS OF 2026 • John Gauger,  
Nancy Hall, Chris Misiano, Sam Mizener,  
Tom Rogers, Anne Umbarger

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John Heaton—Headmaster  
Davidson Morse—School Warden

### OUR MISSION

New Covenant Schools is an educational community serving families of Central Virginia, providing an exceptional education in a classical curriculum within the framework of historic Christianity, furnishing the student with the tools of education and the inspiration to be a lifelong learner.

**new covenant schools**

# NEW COVENANT SCHOOLS

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### 2026 – 2027 Academic Calendar – Key Dates

New Covenant Schools sets its academic calendar as far in advance as is reasonably foreseeable.

This list is subject to change for unforeseen events.

Monday, August 17	<b>School of Rhetoric First Day of School, 8am</b> <b>Grammar &amp; Middle School Meet Your Teacher, 3:30-6pm</b>
Wednesday, August 19	<b>PreK – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade First Day of School</b> (12pm dismissal for PreK, K – 1 <sup>st</sup> Grade)
Monday, September 7	NO SCHOOL, Labor Day
Thursday, October 15	12pm Dismissal, Fall Break Begins
Friday – Monday, October 16-19	NO SCHOOL, Fall Break
Monday, November 2	NO SCHOOL, K-12 Parent Teacher Conferences
Monday – Friday, November 23-27	NO SCHOOL, Thanksgiving Break
Friday, December 18	11am Dismissal, Christmas Break Begins
Monday – Tuesday, December 21 – January 5, 2027	NO SCHOOL, Christmas Break
Wednesday, January 6	Students Return
Wednesday – Thursday, January 6-14	J Term in School of Rhetoric
Friday, January 15	School of Rhetoric Students Do Not Attend
Monday, January 18	NO SCHOOL, Professional Development
Wednesday, February 10	12pm Dismissal, Winter Break Begins
Thursday – Monday, February 11-15	NO SCHOOL, Winter Break
Friday, March 19	11am Dismissal, Spring/Easter Break Begins
Monday – Monday, March 22-29	NO SCHOOL, Spring/Easter Break
Monday, April 19	NO SCHOOL, Professional Development
Monday, May 3	NO SCHOOL, May Breather
Wednesday, May 26	<b>School of Rhetoric Last Day (3pm Dismissal)</b>
Thursday, May 27	<b>Kindergarten Graduation and Last Day (12pm Dismissal)</b> <b>Pre-K Program and Last Day (12pm Dismissal)</b>
Friday, May 28	<b>Middle School Last Day (12pm Dismissal)</b> <b>Grammar School (1<sup>st</sup>- 4<sup>th</sup>) Last Day (12pm Dismissal)</b>
Saturday, May 29	Graduation
Monday – Saturday, May 31 – June 4	Senior Trip