

Dear RVA Students, Staff, and Alumni,

16 June, 2018

In recent months, we have begun to hear stories from RVA alumni, both students and staff, about their experiences at RVA. Some of these stories have been positive and encouraging, and some have been quite painful to read, dealing with subjects like bullying, harassment, and misogyny or sexism. At the urging of members of the RVA community, the AIM International Office is setting up an email address where these stories can be shared.

Why we are doing this

AIM and RVA leadership want to provide a place for these stories to be told, heard, and seriously considered. We need to better understand the situation at RVA, both past and present. What we can learn from your stories will help us to make RVA a better, safer, and more God-honoring school and community.

How the information will be used

The stories will be compiled into a report, combining general information (for example, how many students wrote about bullying in the dorms) with specific cases (details of some of these incidents). The report will be sent to RVA leaders, the RVA School Board, AIM leaders, and the RVA parents and staff. The report will also be shared with the organization doing the audit of RVA culture in the coming months, if they want to see it.

Confidentiality

Only AIM IO Directors will have access to the mailbox and stories. No names will be used in the report or otherwise shared. Stories will be attributed to a single initial, sex, and years at RVA (for example, "A," female, RVA student from 2001 to 2007). Sending a story implies permission to share the general information in the report. As far as specific details, please state explicitly "I give my permission for details of my story to be shared," or "I do not give permission for details of my story to be shared." If the issue of permission is not addressed by the writer, we will assume that you do not want details shared and will respect that.

What we are looking for and what we are not looking for

We would like to hear stories, good and bad, past and present, about your experiences at RVA. Here are a few guidelines:

- We want firsthand stories. Please don't try to tell others' stories...encourage them to do so themselves.
- We welcome stories from current and former students, current and former staff.
- Please do not include any names but your own; this is not a place for grievances against individuals. If certain individuals are part of your story, please refer to them indirectly, i.e. "the teacher, the coach, my roommate, etc." If you have a specific grievance involving child abuse, please write directly to Cath Swanson (see details below).

- Try to keep your story under 2 pages, or 1000 words. This is not an absolute limit, but if we get a lot of long stories, it will be hard to manage.
- We would like to hear stories, not editorials. Of course, your feelings and opinions are part of your experiences, and they will be part of your story. But try to avoid extended commentary about RVA. Let your experience speak for itself.
- Write about anything you like, respecting the above guidelines.
- Format: please include your full name, years at RVA, and sex (again, your name will not be shared). Please grant or deny permission to use your story in the report (“confidentiality,” above). We prefer simple email messages, but Word documents and PDFs are acceptable as well

A word about child abuse

AIM has an extensive child safety policy (GMP 12, AIM Member Handbook, available upon request). Here is a key statement:

AIM shall respond to all reports of suspected child abuse which involves any AIM personnel. It shall also respond to any adult's report of abuse as a child under AIM's care or by one of its members.

If your story is about child abuse that you have personally experienced from an adult while at RVA, and you would like AIM to follow up on this (investigation, which may lead to reports, dismissal, and criminal prosecution), then it is best if you write directly to Cath Swanson, our Child Safety Officer. This applies to both current and former students. Even if you are now an adult and the event is from the distant past, and you now wish to follow this up with us, AIM is committed to responding to you. Cath’s email is cso.io@aimint.org If you write to her, please share all details, names, etc. Also, if you have a concern about an individual currently at RVA who is a safety risk to minors, please inform Cath at the above address, in order that a child safety assessment can be made using the normal process.

If your story is about child abuse and you do not desire AIM to follow-up, then please send us your story at the address below, omitting names of the perpetrators. We want to hear these stories, even if you do not desire any particular follow-up. We will protect your identity and follow your desires for confidentiality.

If you have questions, please write directly to me or to Cath.

The address and time frame

Please send your stories to rvastories.io@aimint.org The mailbox will be active for about 4 months, until 31 October, 2018.

Thank you in advance. I look forward to hearing from you.

Luke

Luke Herrin
AIM International Director