

the challenge

Magazine for The Center for Gifted Studies

NSCF GRANT CREATES NEW OPPORTUNITY

Science teachers in middle schools across the United States will have the opportunity to apply to become National Stem Cell Foundation Scholars, thanks to a grant from the National Stem Cell Foundation (NSCF). The board of the NSCF has pledged \$500,000 to fund this opportunity over five years.

Dr. Paula Grisanti, Chair of the NSCF, said, "The National Stem Cell Foundation is delighted to partner with The Center for Gifted Studies at WKU and The Carol Martin Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science to make these scholarships possible. We know that children who become excited about science in middle school are the ones who will pursue science in high school and major in science at the college level. The Center for Gifted Studies' and The Gatton Academy's national reputations for excellence and



deep experience in STEM education will make this collaboration a 'best in class' opportunity to fund advanced education for teachers who will inspire the next generation of STEM kids nationwide."

Ten teachers will come to WKU for the week of June 5-11, 2016, with a follow-up Challenge Project and a three-day weekend in January in Washington, DC. The deadline for applying to be a NSCF Scholar for the coming year is April 15.

Rico Tyler, a SKYTeach Master Teacher at WKU, will lead in the development of the programming for the NSCF Scholars. Rico's experiences teaching science in high school and at the Governor's Scholars Program, conducting professional development for science teachers, and preparing science teachers combine to make him ideal for this particular program.

Dr. Julia Link Roberts, Mahurin Professor of Gifted Studies, stated, "This partnership will accrue benefits for the NSCF Scholars, middle school students in their classrooms, and middle school science teachers with whom they collaborate."

Contact Julia Roberts at gifted@wku.edu or 270.745.6323 for information about applying to be a NSCF Scholar.

Letter from Julia



Dear Friends of The Center,

Thirty-five years ago, The Center for Gifted Studies offered one workshop on gifted education. Today, The Center provides year-round programming for children and young people, parents, and educators. WKU is known as “a leading American university with international reach,” and The Center for Gifted Studies has become a leading center for gifted education with international reach.

The Center for Gifted Studies has been “making memories” for the last 35 years. All programming – SCATS, VAMPY, travel, Super Saturdays, Camp Innovate, and Camp Explore – has created these memorable experiences for elementary, middle, and high school-aged young people. I invite you to share one of those memories via email (julia.roberts@wku.edu). We will collect those experiences and share them as you give permission to do so.

As The Center celebrates its 35 years, we will be looking back and moving forward. I would love to hear your ideas for “tweaking” what The Center offers for children and young people, parents, and

educators (teachers, gifted coordinators, counselors, principals, and superintendents). What have you experienced with The Center that resonated with you? What should we consider adding to our repertoire of programs?

Another way you can help is to make sure we have your current mailing and email addresses. If your son or daughter’s mail from The Center for Gifted Studies comes to your house but he or she lives elsewhere, it would be great if you sent that information via email to gifted@wku.edu. We really appreciate help updating our database.

One more way for you to support The Center is to talk with others about opportunities we offer. Remember, opportunities are not real opportunities until you know about them.

Thirty-five years and thriving, thanks to the support of many friends. Thank you, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in red ink that reads "Julia Link Roberts". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Julia Link Roberts
Mahurin Professor of Gifted Studies

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**Join The Center's
Email List.**

If you are interested
in getting information
between issues of
The Challenge, join
our mailing list at
wku.edu/gifted.

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THE MISSION FOR THE CENTER

We are committed to encouraging excellence by providing educational opportunities and resources to three populations: gifted and talented students, educators working with gifted students, and parents of gifted students.



THE VISION FOR THE CENTER

An internationally preeminent center, The Center for Gifted Studies envisions expanding services in five areas: (1) offering educational programs for gifted children and youth, (2) providing professional development opportunities for educators, (3) enhancing communication and advocacy for gifted children, (4) conducting research and developing curriculum to remove the learning ceiling, and (5) building a testing and counseling component for gifted children and their families.



Miranda Estes grew up loving Pokémon. In fact, the popular Japanese card/video game made her want to study biology. She saw the Pokémon's evolution throughout the game as a way to explore genetics and the process of animals changing over time. Thanks to Fall Super Saturdays, she had the opportunity to do just that through teaching her Pokémon Evolution class, which was offered to 5th-6th graders for four weeks during November of Super Saturdays.

Miranda's class was one of 36 classes offered on the campus of Western Kentucky University as part of Fall Super Saturdays, which also hosted four classes at the Kentucky Science Center in Louisville. The program, now in its 24th year, features classes for 1st-8th graders that explore a wide variety of unique subjects that may not be found in the standard classroom curriculum. Other classroom settings do not give students a chance to study dominant and recessive traits by looking at dull and shiny Pokémon or the opportunity to create a new species of Pokémon from scratch.

Aaron Gordon (Fall Super Saturdays [FSS] 2012-15; Winter Super Saturdays [WSS] 2012-15) could hardly believe his eyes when he saw that a Pokémon class was being offered this fall. "I liked Pokémon ever since I was 4 years old," he shared. "I've always been looking for a Pokémon class because that would be one of my ideal classes. Whenever I saw Pokémon Evolution, the deal was just done."

Another type of animal took center stage in Laura Beth Hayes' class for 1st and 2nd graders: owls. In *Owls Are a HOOT: Adventures*

with Owls, students took a closer look at the nocturnal birds by creating lap books filled with facts, crafting owl heads made of food, developing interactive timelines, dissecting owl pellets, and marveling at the "guest owls" who dropped by during the fourth week.

Not only did Sebastian Thomas (FSS 2015) enjoy eating the owl head, which was constructed using graham crackers, Oreos, chocolate chips, and Cheez-It crackers, he also learned that owls have three sets of eyelids. His classmate

Mackenzie Hulsey (FSS 2015) was eager to share what she learned. "Owls can see in the dark and turn their toes backwards or forwards!" she revealed with a smile.

Laura Beth says this is what learning looks like at Super Saturdays. "It's a more authentic learning experience because it's something the child is interested in," she explained. "They're getting to explore it from so many different angles. The passion is there much more than in a regular classroom. It's liberating as a teacher because I'm not restricted to a set standard. I can

go as far as the kids' interests are. I have that freedom and flexibility."

Technology is typically seen as a tool for learning, but what if something like an iPad became the focus of its own class? That was the thought behind iPad Explorations, a class for grades three and four taught by Robin Tyler (a former Super Saturdays student herself) and Josh Keeling.

Both Cole Scott (FSS 2012-15; WSS 2013-14) and Allie Link (FSS 2013-15) demonstrated the far-reaching appeal of technology when asked why they signed up for iPad Explorations. "I love iPads and thought it would be good to learn more about them," Cole said. Alley added, "I didn't know much about my iPad since I just got it. I went to this class to learn more about it."

"Everybody I know has a phone or tablet with a camera on it," Josh explained. "I use mine all the time. I see something and wonder what it is, so I pull out my microscope, get really close, and take an awesome picture that I'm showing everyone."

Building microscopes and attaching them to iPads allowed Josh and Robin's students to take close-up photos of everyday objects that revealed stunning details. After dabbling in science,



OWLS, IPADS, POKÉMON, AND PULLEYS

Wide Range of Classes at Fall Super Saturdays Appeals to Students of All Ages



EMILIE MILCAREK

The Owls Are A Hoot: Adventures With Owls class gets introduced to Hootie, a blind Barred Owl, on Saturday, November 21, 2015.

the class shifted its focus to the arts by recording stop-motion films on the iPads with Legos, Play-Doh, and drawings as the subjects. With any activity, Josh and Robin wanted to keep the students moving and thinking. “We get an opportunity with these kids to do more hands-on things,” Josh said. “They can go off and explore.”

Exploring the engineering design process with 7th and 8th grade students was the mission of Craig Frey’s class, Engineer This: Pulleys, Levers, and Gears. The engineering kits Craig used in his class challenged his students in new ways: “After the kids build something, it gives them a challenge problem, which fits great with the engineering design process. How can you modify whatever it is you built to make it go faster, longer, or farther? They



EMILIE MILCAREK

have to figure it out. For a lot of these students, that’s a new thing. They say, ‘You’re not going to tell me how?’ No! Go figure it out. If it doesn’t work, try again.”

For a student like Hunter Clemons

(FSS 2010,12,15 and WSS 2011,12,14,15), the chance to learn about pulley systems, block and tackle, mechanical advantage, gears and gear transfer, universal joint, carts and cart launchers, snow tires, and winches was a dream come true. “I don’t really like arts and crafts,” he admitted. “I like engineering and learning about simple machines.”

No matter their knowledge level, students can challenge themselves through the hands-on, minds-on activities that make Super Saturdays so special. This kind of authentic learning is a real treat for students and teachers alike.

To learn more about this program or register for Winter Super Saturdays, visit wku.edu/gifted and look for “Super Saturdays” under the “Students” tab.

THE CENTER TRAVELS TO BELGIUM AND THE NETHERLANDS



Where would you choose to travel over the fall school break? Fifteen people made the decision to join The Center for Gifted Studies' group that traveled to Belgium and the Netherlands from October 2nd to 11th.

Highlights of the travel experience differed from one traveler to another. Dillon Tate (Winter Super Saturdays 2014; VAMPY 2014-15; Travel 2015) said, "I am glad to have been able to experience all of the museums and monuments we did and to have had wonderful food, guides,

and accommodations. I also loved the trip to Waterloo and learning all about the history of the site and how the battle progressed." Yes, it was a wonderful visit we made to Waterloo, and it was a perfect time to visit the state-of-the-art museum that had recently opened for the observance of 200 years since the Battle of Waterloo was fought.

The visit to Waterloo included an opportunity to climb to the highest point on the battlefield, the Mount of the Lion; explore the exhibits in the museum; and

visit the headquarters of Napoleon and the Duke of Wellington.

This year is also important in remembering World War I as it has been 100 years since the Great War. Opportunities to learn about World War I included the In Flanders Field Museum that is also state of the art, the Tyne Cot British Cemetery, and the German Cemetery at Langemark.

Another favorite place to visit on the trip was Bruges. Yash Singh (Winter Super Saturdays 2012; SCATS 2012; VAMPY 2015; Travel 2015) responded, "Bruges was

definitely my favorite city because it was one of the oldest cities we visited. Everything about the city was so beautiful: the architecture, the canals, the churches, and the square.” We enjoyed walking in the gorgeous square, taking a boat ride on the canal, and visiting the Church of Our Lady to see the statue of the Madonna and Child by Michelangelo. What a special time we had in Bruges!

Peter Guthrie (Fall Super Saturdays 2006-12; Winter Super Saturdays 2007-11; SCATS 2012; VAMPY 2013-15; Travel 2015) said, “The highlight of the trip was getting to know a foreign culture and history. I really admired how Belgium and the Netherlands took care to preserve their centuries of history and display it very powerfully. From the Grand Place in Brussels to the Hidden Attic Church in Amsterdam, I felt a sort of intimacy with the country. By far, my favorite display of culture was the art. My favorite single piece was either *Nightwatch* or the *Ghent Altarpiece*, but everything we saw was so amazing it was hard to decide. The Rijksmuseum has been my favorite museum I’ve ever been to – from Rembrandt to Napoleon’s pianoforte, it brought to life such a neat part of humanity.”

Amsterdam provided many new experiences for the travelers, including visits that reinforce the horrors of World War II. Ethan Tate (Travel 2015) added, “My favorite part of the trip was visiting Anne Frank’s house. It was really interesting learning about the secret annex where they lived with no talking much of the day.” We also visited the Resistance Museum, the Hidden Attic Church, and the National Jewish Theater where the Jewish people were held prior to being sent to concentration camps.

Traveling provides opportunities that are so memorable. The Center’s travel to Belgium and the Netherlands was no exception. So much was learned and so much was enjoyed during the fall travel experience.

The Center will next travel to France April 1-10.



Pete and Dixie Mahurin Speak of the Value of Investing in The Center

Pete and Dixie Mahurin were the invited speakers at the annual meeting of the Cupola Society. This group gathers for brunch, providing an opportunity to honor individuals and organizations with a record of giving to WKU over multiple years. Some of the people in the Cupola Society have dedicated their gifts to The Center for Gifted Studies, and Pete and Dixie are such good friends to The Center.

Below are excerpts from Dixie’s remarks:

“Given my husband’s occupation in the brokerage business, I thought it appropriate to talk about investments and dividends.”

“From my father I learned the value of investing and sharing. He was a minister for 40 years and never accepted an offering for himself; he instead invested offering monies in building funds, church treasuries, or charitable causes. He believed we were stewards of the wealth we had, not owners. He believed in investing our time in others, and so do Pete and I.”

Speaking of the lovely gift the Mahurin family dedicated to The Center for Gifted Studies, Dixie remarked, “What a good decision this was! This investment not only strengthened the gifted studies program, but also taught our daughter that good investing, wise investing, pays dividends that go far beyond a check. It is better perhaps to fund a scholarship than buy a seldom-used treasure.”

Dr. Sarah Mahurin (SCATS 1990-93; VAMPY 193-96; Counselor; Teaching Assistant) is Pete and Dixie’s daughter. She, too, is a special friend of The Center for Gifted Studies. Sarah is dean of Timothy Dwight College at Yale University. Sarah and Matt Mutter are parents of June Caroline, born May 2, 2015.

John & Katherine Abbott
Louisville, KY

John & Susan Allpress
Russellville, KY

Nellie Arnett (Counselor)
Bowling Green, KY
Super Saturdays

Virginia Arterburn
Smiths Grove, KY

Peter & Melissa Ashby
Owensboro, KY

AT&T
Louisville, KY
IdeaFestival Bowling Green

Peter Budny (VAMPY 1996-99)
Duluth, GA
Alumni Fund

Dann & Kathi Cann
Leitchfield, KY
VAMPY Scholarships

Richard & Beth Chapman
Nashville, TN

Tyler Clark (Counselor)
Bowling Green, KY

Matthew & Melanie Cook
Bowling Green, KY

Bob & Sheila Depp
Owensboro, KY

Thomas & Carrie Dichiaro
Lexington, KY

Tom & Janice Donan
Bardstown, KY

Jean Dudgeon
Elizabethtown, KY

Emerson Electric
Saint Louis, MO
*Matching Gift: Wake Norris
(VAMPY 1989-92; Counselor)*

Diane Esrey
Louisville, KY

Sam & Mary Evans
Bowling Green, KY

Ruthene Glass
Bowling Green, KY

John & Carolyn Hagaman
Bowling Green, KY

Steve & Jennifer Hall
Frankfort, KY

Humberto Hernandez
& Nelly Acosta
Bowling Green, KY

Amanda Hines (SCATS 1983-84)
Evansville, IN

Eliane Kurbegov
Miami, FL

FRIENDS

David & Laura Harper Lee
Bowling Green, KY

Ryan & Dana Leisey
Alvaton, KY

Stewart & Amanda Lich
Brownsville, KY

Prabodh & Daksha Mehta
Elizabethtown, KY

Karl & Jennifer Miller
Round Rock, TX

Sunil & Madhavi Muppala
Glasgow, KY

Michael & Julie Muscarella
Paducah, KY

Scott Nass (VAMPY
1988-91; Counselor)
Palm Springs, CA
Alumni Fund

Jonathan Plucker
Glastonbury, CT

Steve & Frances Porter
La Canada Flintridge, CA

Pat Richardson
Louisville, KY

Richard & Julia Roberts
Bowling Green, KY
In Memory of Jim Ford

James & Rebecca Adams
(SCATS 1986-1987) Simpson
Bowling Green, KY

Janet Skees (Travel)
Louisville, KY

Jim & Joyce Ann Spiceland
Salisbury, NC

Bill & Sandra Thomas
Glasgow, KY

Kristen VonGruben
(VAMPY 1990-93)
Fenton, MO
Alumni Fund

Max & Lucy Wilson
Hickman, KY

Joe & Judy Wismann
Talent, OR

Lori Wittlin (VAMPY 1987-89)
Houston, TX

David & Donna Wooden
Leitchfield, KY

RILEY JANE LAWRENCE MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND

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Glendale, CA

Seth Bendorf
Louisville, KY

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Clarksville, IN

Jason & Cynthia Brown
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Fort Campbell, KY

Robin Byrne
Kewdale, Western Australia

Christopher Carlton
Louisville, KY

Derrick & Alissa Clark
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R. W. & Brenda Cogen
Brooks, KY

Jacklyn Colwell
Scottsburg, IN

Helen Cooper
United Kingdom

Kimberli Cox
Scottsdale, AZ

Brad & Shannon Derrick
Louisville, KY

Caitlyn Dial
Holland, MI

Theresa Dougherty
Vancouver, WA

James & Amanda Downey
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Alison Drover-Swift
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Susan Kersey
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Scott Knigge
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David & Sarah Lawrence
Louisville, KY

Mariann Lawrence
Louisville, KY

Mark & Jodi Lindemoen
Prospect, KY

Lucie Madden
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Annette Mansfield
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Jerry Markham
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Patricia Masters
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Palm Springs, CA

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Marjana Nixon
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Robert & Linda Pinter
Erie, PA

Jessica Shapiro
Columbia, MD

Anne Sinnett
Bellingham, WA

Janilee Staack
Rockpoint, IL
In Honor of Rebecca Vickerstaff

Carolyn Tandy
Louisville, KY

John & Rebecca Vickerstaff
Louisville, KY

Kelly Webb
United Kingdom

Sharon Wu
Greenwich, CT



In honor of our 35th birthday, we want to feature stories from our past. Do you have a strong memory of Center programming that you would be willing to share? Have you made lifetime friendships (or life partners) through our summer camps? Did your travel experience play a vital role in your life's path? Did the class or classes you took impact your career? What lessons did you learn about yourself or about life? Please contact us (tracy.inman@wku.edu) if you have a story to share. We look forward to hearing from you!

CELEBRATING 35 YEARS



Little Learners Benefit from Purposeful Play

Allison Bemiss of Little Learners, Big Ideas presented “Purposeful Play” training in September for the Ohio Valley Educational Cooperative (OVEC) with help from Jamie Spugnardi from Green River Regional Educational Cooperative (GRREC), preschool consultant Beth Schaeffer, and Nicole Martin, an occupational therapist for Warren County Public Schools. They discussed the importance of learning through play – specifically block play – and what that looks like in young children. Within these pages you will find testimonials from educators who attended the session and three key takeaways from the Purposeful Play training: celebrate mistakes, the stages of block play, and effective questioning. By implementing these strategies, you will help your little learner explore through purposeful play.

CELEBRATE LEARNING FROM MISTAKES

Without being wrong several times, children will never have a chance to be right. (Nancy Huston, GRREC)

If teachers and families make mistakes sound like an important part of exploring, children will begin to see them as the start of learning rather than an end to learning. (Narrator of *Growing Young Minds* video)

It is very important for children to face challenge in what they do at home and in school. If everything is easy, then there’s no opportunity to develop a good work ethic, to be diligent, to persist. Those are life skills that are critically important for anyone who does well. (Julia Roberts)



“Each time one prematurely teaches a child something he could have discovered himself, that child is kept from inventing it and consequently from understanding it completely.” – Jean Piaget, psychologist

Explore with your little learner. Be prepared to see them make mistakes. What’s even better is for them to see you work through your mistakes. (Narrator)

Give children permission to explore and make mistakes. If they don’t make mistakes, they don’t learn. (Beth Schaeffer)

If children never see parents make a mistake, they begin to feel that mistakes are wrong, embarrassing, and something to be avoided. (Narrator)

We don’t want children to become perfectionists – those who quit trying because

they’re afraid they won’t be perfect. Work with children to recognize that none of us is perfect and we all make mistakes. What we do to recover from mistakes and learn from them is valuable. (Julia)

Help children focus on effort because effort usually leads to success. (Narrator)

To help illustrate learning from mistakes, Little Learners uses Barney Saltsberg’s book *Beautiful Oops*. A video of Barney reading his book is linked at littlelearnersbigideas.org under “The Videos” tab.

“The Purposeful Play training was creative, engaging, and fun! It provided new ways to play, sharpened communication skills, and reinforced knowledge of the Kentucky Early Childhood Standards.”

– Cheryl Dalehite, Preschool Teacher at Little Stars Preschool and Development Center in Fisherville, KY

“The Purposeful Play training was a top-notch training! It was so fulfilling to look across the room and see teachers engaged and being so creative with the materials at their tables. Research clearly shows that young children learn through play but to actually be able to learn different strategies to incorporate play is invaluable. The teachers learned skills that will carry over to other content areas in their classroom, all while utilizing The Kentucky Early Childhood Standards for lesson planning.”

– Bobbie Jo Matney, Preschool Pal and Instructional Coach for OVEC

“An outstanding learning opportunity awaits you! The program refreshed and renewed the innovator in us all. I walked away with enthusiasm!”

– Laura Wheatley, Preschool Teacher at Bear Care in Spencer County, KY

STAGES OF BLOCK PLAY

By using blocks, each child will learn through play at his or her own level. To some extent, when children have the opportunity to learn through play, differentiation begins to occur organically.

Exploring blocks

Children explore the properties and characteristics of the blocks by carrying, touching, moving, holding, piling, knocking down, dropping, and feeling the blocks. This activ-

ity answers the question, “What can I do with these?”

Stacking blocks

Children stack blocks vertically, lay them down and line them up, or configure them horizontally. You will observe children forming a combination of stacks and rows. Children will often repeat a pattern over and over.

Bridging

Children form a space between two blocks, and then place a block to span the space. Eventually, as the child masters and expands bridging, his or her bridges become more elaborate.

Enclosures

Children begin problem solving by planning ahead how they will close up spaces and make an enclosure by standing the blocks on edge. They discover and begin to understand the meaning of inside, outside, perimeter, and boundaries. They also observe balance and symmetry.

Patterns and symmetry

Children can build structures with balance. They can incorporate decorative elements and enhancements. Children explore mathematical relationships in the designs and patterns such as symmetry.

Early/later representational

Children work cooperatively to build a structure, deciding in advance what they will build. They build their structures to

look much like what they have planned in advance and choose to build and play with the structure over a period of several days. The children assign each other roles, and they use a variety of materials to achieve desired effects.

EFFECTIVE QUESTIONING

Ask the right question to the right child at the right time! Observe children’s play and work before entering the scene.

Timing is everything

The goal is to extend play, grow language, and extend thinking skills, not to interrupt play. Children may need wait time. They are not waiting for the teacher to provide the response. They are composing the words for their own thoughts.

It’s their party

Follow the child’s lead. If the child says it’s a zoo, go with it! Interact with conversation about the zoo.

Paint it brighter

As you listen to what children have to say and you repeat their words, add colorful detail. This will help increase the child’s vocabulary.

Give them something to think about

Challenge their thinking with appropriate questioning (what, where, who, when). Hint: You never finish an activity like this with all of the questions answered. Try ending lessons or explorations with, “What do you wonder now?” This gives the child an opportunity to think about what they will explore the next time they are in that center.



The road from Russellville, KY, to Birmingham, England is long, but Sarah Fox (Super Saturdays 2000-03; Travel to Paris 2009; Counselor 2012; Super Saturdays Instructor 2013-14) has made the journey – not just getting there, but doing so in style.

Sarah is a recipient of a scholarship from the U.S. Fulbright Student Program to study for a master's degree in Music, Choral Conducting Pathway, at the University of Birmingham in England. She is studying under the renowned conductor Dr. Simon Halsey, who serves as the director of choral activities at the University of Birmingham as well as the director of the London Symphony Chorus and the Berlin Radio Choir.

A 2015 graduate of WKU (music and history major, Honors College student), Sarah's accomplishments are many: 2015 Ogden Foundation Scholar, Presidential Scholar, Potter College's Outstanding History Student in 2015 and Outstanding Music student in 2014, a US-UK Undergraduate Fulbright awardee to Newcastle University in 2012, Cuba and Austria study abroad programs traveler, and an intern for state Senator Mike Wilson. While at WKU, Sarah intertwined her passions for music, education, and social change, founding an after-school music program at T. C. Cherry Elementary School and tutoring Burmese students.

Her experiences with The Center for Gifted Studies are in about as many capacities as possible – traveler, counselor, and Super Saturdays student and teacher – even playing the piano for the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children (WCGTC) 20th Biennial World Conference in Louisville.

PURSuing THE UNKNOWN WITH COURAGE



In fact, Sarah's travel to France with The Center (2012) had a large impact on her future path. She explained, "It was the first time I left the USA. I clearly remember being on Omaha Beach in Normandy. It was the most intense feeling of grief I had experienced to that day. It was almost as if I could imagine pain and fright from both sides. Juxtaposed against that is a memory of visiting Monet's home at Giverny. The sensation of light floating in the air was breathtaking. It greatly impacted the way I played and understood French piano music. Through both these experiences, I learned that I could connect

and learn from other cultures. This trip facilitated my desire to travel and to find lessons in both commonalities and difference."

The first Super Saturdays class Sarah took when she was in first grade was Music Around the World – what a prescient choice! "I still remember the class – I experienced passion for studying music and discovered that other students shared that interest," she reflected. "I also gained awareness of music traditions that differed from my own. My goal to understand our world more deeply and the role music plays in it owes much to that Super Saturdays class."

One result of Sarah's role as a Super Saturdays teacher was her Honors thesis.

Dare to Care: Teaching Leadership to Gifted Students details the creation and teaching of this class for middle school students. And her desire to teach the class came from her time at the World Conference in Louisville. Sarah explains, "At the time I was studying music, but the conference opened up a new world of possibilities to me. I learned that I should have courage to seek knowledge outside my academic comfort zone. The feeling of be-

ing surrounded by educators – all united by a purpose to help others through knowledge – was so inspiring. The desire to find similar communities of action-oriented thinkers around the world drove me to pursue a Fulbright. As a result of the World Conference, I wanted to teach a Super Saturdays class. The Center responded with overwhelming support. Dr. Roberts and Dr. Inman worked with me to prepare and teach the class Dare to Care: Learn to be an Effective Leader. Dr. Inman also served as the advisor for my capstone thesis for the Honors College."

Jody Dahmer (SCATS 2008; VAMPY 2009-10) will spend the spring semester of 2016 as an intern for the U.S. Department of State Bureau of East Asia and Pacific Affairs in the Office of Regional Security Policy. He will be doing policy work on anything related to security in East Asia, such as human trafficking or drug enforcement. A junior at Western Kentucky University, Jody envisions a career in diplomacy. He spent the summer of 2015 in Taiwan studying Chinese through the Taiwan-United States Sister Relations Alliance.

Ann Skulas-Ray (SCATS 1996; VAMPY 1997-99) and her family are relocating to Arizona where Ann is joining the Department of Nutritional Sciences at the University of Arizona as an assistant professor. She earned a Ph.D. from the Pennsylvania State University, where her clinical research examined the effects of fatty acids and plant bioactives on inflammation, lipids, blood pressure, vascular function, and other cardiovascular disease risk factors. Her post-doctoral studies have utilized a human model of induced inflammation

to study the effects of omega-3 fatty acids on inflammatory responses. She and her husband, Ethan, will miss their friends in State College, PA, but are looking forward to hiking and exploring beautiful Tucson with baby daughter, Hazel.

Rachel Veitschegger Wheeler (Super Saturdays 1991-93; VAMPY 2000-01; Counselor 2004-05) graduated from WKU in 2007 with a BS in Marketing. She followed her brother Adam out west and is now settled in Bend, OR, the land of skiing and microbreweries. She is the Refractive Coordinator and Marketing Director for an ophthalmology clinic. She loves the challenges and huge rewards of running the LASIK clinic. She lives with her husband Steve and takes advantage of the low-humidity and endless hiking trails of Central Oregon.

What I took away from The Center's programs wasn't necessarily a drive for more education. It was the confidence to speak in front of a class or the teamwork skills to organize a presentation or an activity. Those summers shaped my sense of humor and grew my confidence immensely.



Now that she is at the University of Birmingham, Sarah's goal is to use music to help people, an aim that has been a staple for her for years. Sarah describes best what her many experiences with The Center have meant to her, "Overall, though, my mentors at The Center best prepared me for my Fulbright journey by teaching me to pursue the unknown with courage. I learned (and have to continually remind myself daily, for there are many new unknowns in Birmingham) that my value is not rooted in grades, scholarships, or tangible measures of success, but in resiliency and the strength to approach challenges from the perspective of love. It's a life-long pursuit to live with this attitude, but The Center is an inspiring model."

The Center is better for having Sarah as part of us.

About the US-UK Fulbright Commission

Created by treaty on September 22, 1948, the US-UK Educational Commission (Fulbright Commission) fosters mutual cultural understanding through educational exchange between both nations. The Commission is the only bi-lateral, transatlantic scholarship program, offering awards for study or research in any field, at any accredited university in the United States or the United Kingdom. The Commission is part of the Fulbright program conceived by Senator J. William Fulbright in the aftermath of World War II to promote leadership, learning, and empathy between nations through educational exchange.

The Commission selects scholars through a rigorous application and interview process. In making these awards, the Commission looks not only for academic excellence but a focused application, a range of extracurricular and community activities, demonstrated ambassadorial skills, a desire to further the Fulbright Program, and a plan to give back to the recipient's home country upon returning. The global Fulbright Program is one of the most prestigious awards programs worldwide operating in over 150 countries, with more than 300,000 alumni. The Commission is funded partially by the governments of the United States and United Kingdom, with additional support coming from a variety of individual and institutional partners.

(Adapted from the Fulbright Commission Website at fulbright.org.uk/about/what-we-do)

The success of twice-exceptional children was the focus of the annual Twice-Exceptional Seminar hosted by The Center for Gifted Studies on October 22. Dr. Mary Ruth Coleman shared how twice-exceptional students can find success through programming options and discussed strategies to support learning. She welcomed an audience of parents, educators, and students who had varying degrees of exposure to twice exceptionality. Some had decades of experience working with those who are twice exceptional. Some were parents of children who fit the definition. Others worked with students who were highly intelligent in one area but also struggled with a disability.

For WKU assistant professor Dusteen Knotts, Mary Ruth's message confirmed the efforts she's made over the course of 35 years working in special education. The real thrill for Dusteen, though, came from seeing her SPED 335 and 345 students have those "light bulb moments" during Mary Ruth's discussion. "I brought 18 students with me," she said. "We're just starting to get the concept of twice-exceptional children out there to teacher candidates, so this was very beneficial for them."

Dusteen's students had plenty of take-aways from Mary Ruth's seminar to apply during their work with twice-exceptional learners. Tony Morrison said, "These kids sometimes need that little bit of extra attention. We can stimulate their gifted minds and help them grow academically." Arielle McKinney added, "I learned twice-



JOSH RAWMER

TWICE-EXCEPTIONAL SEMINAR EYE-OPENING FOR PARTICIPANTS

For some in attendance, hearing Mary Ruth describe the characteristics of twice-exceptional children was a revelation that shed new light on previous frustrations. Daran Wall, an assistant principal at Casey County Middle School, said, "I have students come into my office with these referrals. I ask them what's going on in this class where they have all A's and they say 'I'm bored.' My immediate response was, 'You're too smart to be acting this way.' But then once I found out about twice-exceptionality, it made me realize there are some missing pieces here on our part as the faculty and staff."



JOSH RAWMER

exceptional students have the same needs we do. They want to be pushed and grow socially."

Alex Lonnemann wants to "foster that twice-exceptionality." She said: "You do that by letting their peers know their classmate is highly intelligent in this area. If you need help, you should go to them. A lot of times, students look at that classmate and say, 'They have a disability; they don't know what they're doing.' They count them out, and they should not be counted out at all. If you can foster that mutual respect in the classroom, then other kids are going to look to them as a leader."

Collaboration across all areas of education is Dusteen's hope moving forward. "The gifted community has been the one carrying this torch," she shared. "We're hoping to see special education come along as well. This will be an importation partnership and collaboration to meet the needs of these students."

For more information about the Twice-Exceptional Seminar, visit wku.edu/gifted and look under the "Educators" tab.



Dr. Mary Ruth Coleman from the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina speaks to parents and educators during the Twice-Exceptional Students Seminar October 22 at WKU.

TWICE-EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS DEFINED

Mary Ruth Coleman and Julia Roberts were editors of a special issue of *Gifted Child Today* (October 2015) that focused on twice-exceptional (2e) learners. The central focus of this issue was the new definition of 2e learners developed by the National Twice-Exceptional Community of Practice (2e CoP) that included stakeholders from various organizations interested in these special learners who have gifts and talents but also one or more disabilities. This special issue included responses from various role groups who interact with 2e learners – a principal, gifted education and special education coordinators, clinical psychologists, school psychologists, teachers at various levels, parents, and young people. The focus on various role groups highlights the need for a team of professionals and parents to work together in order for twice-exceptional children to thrive in school.

The National 2e CoP definition of twice-exceptional individuals follows:

Twice-exceptional individuals evidence exceptional ability and disability, which results in a unique set of circumstances. Their exceptional ability may dominate, hiding their disability; their disability may dominate, hiding their exceptional ability; each may mask the other so that neither is recognized or addressed. 2e students, who may perform below, at, or above grade level, require the following:

- *Specialized methods of identification that consider the possible interaction of the exceptionalities,*
- *Enriched/advanced educational opportunities that develop the child's interests, gifts, and talents while also meeting the child's learning needs,*

- *Simultaneous supports that ensure the child's academic success and social-emotional well-being, such as accommodations, therapeutic interventions, and specialized instruction.*

Working successfully with this unique population requires specialized academic training and ongoing professional development. (National 2e Community of Practice, 2014)

This special issue can be used to build awareness about 2e by forming a study group or using it for a professional learning community study. It can also be read and discussed by parents and teachers working with a 2e student. This special issue on 2e young people can open the dialogue about positive ways to address the social-emotional and learning needs of this often-misunderstood group of students.

ADVOCATING FOR GIFTED EDUCATION FUNDING IN KENTUCKY

What do you know that costs the same in 2016 as it did in 1990? Although the costs for personnel and curriculum have not remained steady, funding for gifted education in Kentucky has been stagnant. Now is the time to advocate for \$15 million rather than maintain funding as it was 25 years ago.

- Providing adequate support for gifted education (that isn't happening now) creates a bright future for Kentucky. It adds to the economic well-being of the commonwealth as it holds excellence as the goal for children and young people who can achieve at the highest levels.
- The current funding provided a salary for one or more specialists in gifted education plus curriculum materials in 1990, but that amount does not cover a salary today.



- The face of gifted education must change. Additional funding is needed to ensure that identification measures are available for discovering gifts and talents among all children, including those from lower-income families, children for whom English is not the first language, and children of all ethnic and racial groups.

- Gifted children have needs created by their strengths, so they do not look needy. However, that assumption is incorrect. They need services that allow them to learn every day they are in school just like all other children do. They need curriculum with no ceiling in order to achieve their potential

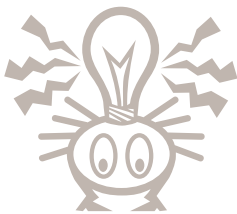
Ask your members of the Kentucky House of Representatives and the Kentucky Senate to support \$15 million for gifted education in the 2016 budget.

Join us for a day of celebrating ideas at

Friday, March 18, 2016
Downing Student Union

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Tracy Inman (from left), Martha Sandefur, J.T. Sandefur, Julia Link Roberts, Sam Evans, and Mary Evans

Julia Link Roberts Honored

Julia Link Roberts received the Distinguished Educator Award from the Kentucky Association of Teacher Educators (KATE) September 25, recognizing the impact she has had on teacher education and all facets of gifted education in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. The KATE Distinguished Educator Award honors outstanding professional educators who have made significant contributions to the educational community in Kentucky.

The recognition by her fellow teacher educators from across Kentucky humbled Julia. "What an honor it is to be recognized by the Kentucky Association for Teacher Educators for my work in teacher education and gifted education," she expressed. "It is very important to



recognize differences among children in order to address their needs. Gifted young people have needs created by their strengths so they may not look needy."

A fellow professor in WKU's School of Teacher Education, Dusteen Knotts, nominated Julia for the award. "Last year,

when I read the requirements for this award, I knew immediately that I must present Dr. Roberts for consideration," she said. "She is a treasure for Western Kentucky University and the very definition of a Distinguished Kentucky Educator."

Sam Evans, Dean of WKU's College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, submitted an additional nominating letter. He wrote, "As a professional educator, it is an honor and a privilege to work with Dr. Roberts. She is an advocate for all students receiving appropriate educational services to achieve at their fullest potential and has committed a lifetime of service to others."



Jonathan Vaughn (from left) visits with VAMPY alumna Andi Dahmer and Denis Hodzic during a reception celebrating the first exhibit of murals created by VAMPY students enrolled in Nazi Germany and the Holocaust October 30 at the Kentucky Museum. Jonathan was previously a teaching assistant for the class and also helped prepare the murals to be exhibited.

SAM OLDENBURG

Never Again Holocaust Murals Go on Tour

More than 20 years of learning have produced a powerful collection of murals that were displayed at WKU in the fall and will go on tour this spring.

Since the mid-1990s, students enrolled in the Nazi Germany and the Holocaust class of the Summer Program for Verbally and Mathematically Precocious Youth (VAMPY) have been making the murals which depict scenes from the Holocaust.

Ron Skillern has taught the class since 1992 and has hoped to put the murals on exhibit nearly as long. “It’s been something

that has been in our mind,” he recounted. “Dr. Julia and I have talked about how they’re so powerful that it would be really neat to see them on exhibit somewhere.”

That dream came to fruition, thanks to a grant from the Jewish Heritage Fund for Excellence to curate a traveling exhibit. The exhibit was displayed at the Kentucky Museum on WKU’s campus October 27 – November 5 and will next be displayed in Louisville.

Jewish Heritage Fund for Excellence Executive Director Jeff Polson spoke at a reception celebrating the exhibit on October 30. “It is a testament to a lasting message that we cannot forget,” he said of the mural collection. “This exhibit is an important link in a growing chain of activities that will continue to focus our memories on this terrible period.”

WKU President Gary Ransdell also spoke at the reception and expressed his



SAM OLDENBURG

pleasure at what VAMPY students are able to accomplish. “This is the kind of thing that we’re fortunate to be able to do with highly gifted and talented junior and senior high school students in such a profound way,” he remarked. “I’m proud to be part of a university that not only does this, but keeps it and puts it on display for everyone to see.”

For Ron, the exhibit was an opportunity to look back at many years of VAMPY teaching. He saw much more than just the murals themselves when walking through the exhibit. “For me it’s the experience of actually making it,” he explained. “I see the discussions that go into making it. I see the kids that are now (some of them) well into their thirties who worked on this.”

One of those students was Andi Dahmer (SCATS 2009; VAMPY 2010-13), who took the class in 2010. She is now a freshman in the WKU Honors College and attended the exhibit reception. “Seeing them all in one place, it’s just indescribable,” she asserted. “It shows that different classes interpreted different things and took different things from the VAMPY experience, even though a lot of times we watched the same movies or we had similar class discussions.”

When displayed together, the murals make an impressive impact, said Julia Roberts, Executive Director of The Center for Gifted Studies. “Hosting an exhibit of murals produced in this class is a tribute to Ron Skillern as the teacher as well as to the students who have learned under his tutelage,” she said. “This mural exhibit is artistic as well as haunting in its messages.”

The murals are accompanied by informational signage to educate viewers about the symbols and events depicted. Ethan Holaday (SCATS 2008-09; VAMPY 2010-11), Ron’s teaching assistant in 2014 and 2015, researched the information.

The 18 murals will be added to this summer during VAMPY and will continue traveling to a variety of venues in the coming years.



Gary Ransdell (from left), Ron Skillern, Julia Roberts, and Dick Roberts

Ron Skillern Honored for Volunteerism

Ron Skillern was recognized as The Center for Gifted Studies’ volunteer of the year during the 2015 Summit Awards ceremony held as part of WKU’s homecoming week.

Ron has taught Nazi Germany and the Holocaust during the Summer Program for Verbally and Mathematically Precocious Youth (VAMPY) since 1992, and his students have looked to him as a mentor and a role model long after they left his classroom. In addition to teaching, he helps distribute textbooks all over campus ahead of the Advanced Placement Summer Institute every summer.

Teaching and volunteering with The Center has been a rewarding experience, Ron revealed. “To be able to be part of something that’s much bigger than yourself, that’s much bigger than any one program, is just neat,” he said. “In education a lot of times, we talk, but we don’t do anything. The Center does stuff, and that’s very attractive to me.”

Over the last year, Ron put in countless hours to plan, design, and build an exhibit of murals created by his VAMPY class. With help from students at Bowling Green High School (where he teaches social studies) and fellow teacher Jonathan Vaughn, he built an impressive display system to present the murals. “I felt at times like I had enough wood to frame a house,” Ron quipped.

Ron was a clear choice to be the 2015 volunteer of the year, The Center’s Executive Director Julia Roberts explained. “Ron Skillern has been a faithful volunteer for The Center, helping in many ways over many years,” she said. “He can be counted on to move hundreds of books for the Advanced Placement Institute from building to building – a huge task. He conceptualized the exhibit frames for the murals and built them all with the help of students.”

“What I admire most in Ron is his willingness to help us at The Center no matter what the need is,” she concluded.

At the Berta Excellence in Education Seminar in October, Dr. Ed Amend shared an abundance of knowledge about the social-emotional needs of gifted children. A clinical psychologist focusing on the needs of gifted individuals, Ed has a private practice in Lexington, KY. More than 75 people took advantage of the opportunity offered by The Center for Gifted Studies, thanks to a generous gift from Vince and Kathleen Berta. After the seminar, *The Challenge* asked Ed several questions about the needs of gifted children.

Q: What are some of the social and emotional issues common among gifted children?

A: The social-emotional issues related to gifted children in general range from things like asynchronous or uneven development to perfectionism and overexcitability (OE). When we are talking about the asynchrony, we are thinking about a gifted kid who is advanced in one area but weaker in another area (that could be advanced in math but grade level in reading or advanced academically but less

advanced with motor skills). That sometimes can create frustration or a negative self-image because the youngsters can judge themselves based on what they cannot do and assume there is something wrong with them. They are different from other kids in at least one way, and often times that creates differences in social relationships. The ways they interact or react to other people—for example, they may have a large vocabulary or an unusual sense of humor—can turn people off. Then of course you have to throw in that perfec-

EXPLORING SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL NEEDS OF GIFTED STUDENTS



Dr. Ed Amend speaks about the social-emotional needs of gifted children during the parent session at the Berta Excellence in Education Seminar October 15.

tionistic side of things, which can present as an extreme sense of fairness, justice, and precision or a debilitating paralysis resulting from a desire to be perfect. It can get very frustrating for others to deal with them or it can get very frustrating for them to deal with themselves when they cannot allow themselves to turn in a paper that is not exactly the way they want it to be. OE involves the heightened experience of or a heightened response to any stimulus (e.g., physical pain, emotional distress, or pleasurable experiences).

Q: What are some of the common myths about gifted children?

A: The biggest one is that they can do fine on their own. It just really is not true. Just as a kid who is significantly below average needs specialized educational services, a gifted kid who is significantly above average needs specialized educational services. The needs, of course, are very different for those two types of students, but both do need specialized services in school and support to deal with some of the social-emotional aspects of growing up gifted. There are myths about asynchrony, such as they should be good at everything, and helping gifted students understand their strengths and their weaknesses is important. We can also help them understand that being bright or being a fast learner does not necessarily mean you are better than anybody else, which is a belief that leads to myths about giftedness and elitism. Then, you have myths that they are going to succeed without help, or that they do not really have any problems because they are gifted and gifted kids do not have problems. Gifted kids do not necessarily have more problems than anybody else, but they have about the same number of problems. For example, if you would expect a certain number of kids to be depressed, you would expect a certain number of gifted kids to be depressed as well. Additionally,

gifted children face risks that other groups do not face, such as inappropriate curriculum and lack of support, especially from those who believe these myths.

Q: How can parents and educators support giftedness?

A: I think one of the big things is to get kids to stretch themselves and attempt things that they may not think they can accomplish. That does not mean pushing



them to the point of exhaustion or anything like that, but it means giving them the opportunity to stretch in an engaging, challenging curriculum so that they can continue to learn rather than doing the same things over and over again. I think about it in some ways like athletics. We do not take a kid who excels at baseball and say, "Well, you're only in eighth grade, so you have to play only eighth graders." If a kid in eighth grade is playing at a level that he or she can be competitive on the varsity team, then he or she will play on the varsity team, and that is appropriate. We develop that talent; we build that talent; we help that child grow and continue

to get better. The same should go for education. The process of learning and how much you learn, not whether you got the 100 percent, can be more important in some situations.

Q: Where can parents look for help when it comes to handling the social and emotional needs of their gifted children?

A: Locally, we have the Kentucky Association for Gifted Education (KAGE), the statewide advocacy organization that supports gifted education throughout the Commonwealth. Nationally, the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) supports the importance of these issues across the country. There are also many resources on the web. Hoagies' Gifted Education Page is a tremendous website that provides lots of information for parents about gifted issues, educational issues, and social and emotional needs. Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted (SENG), a national nonprofit organization, has a great resource library and provides conferences for parents and gifted students. The Davidson Institute for Talent Development has an extensive library of articles online as well. If things are more serious and the child is experiencing some clinically significant disabilities where he or she is getting into trouble at school, there are some counselors and psychologists available who work with gifted kids. Finally, our book, *A Parent's Guide to Gifted Children*, is a practical source for information about the social-emotional needs and parenting strategies for gifted children.

If you are interested in pursuing a Master of Arts in Education in Gifted Education and Talent Development, contact Dr. Julia Roberts at julia.roberts@wku.edu or 270.745.6323 or learn more at wku.edu/gifted/mae.

KENTUCKY ADVOCATES HONORED AT NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Two Kentucky advocates for gifted education were honored by the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) at their 2015 annual conference Friday, November 13 in Phoenix, AZ. Lynette Baldwin was presented the David W. Belin Advocacy Award, and Keith Davis received the NAGC/Ball State Administrator Award.

Lynette has been the Executive Director of the Kentucky Association for Gifted Education (KAGE) since 1999. She has been involved with gifted education for more than 35 years, beginning with serving as the first gifted and talented coordinator for Paducah Independent Schools. Lynette works tirelessly to plan conferences and professional development; makes presentations locally, nationally, and internationally; and works closely with many organizations to champion the needs of gifted children.

Lynette can be found walking the halls of the Capitol in Frankfort when the legislature is in session, lobbying for appropriate educational opportunities for Kentucky's gifted children. As Representative Derrick Graham said, "Lynette Baldwin is an exceptional person who is deeply committed to making a positive difference in the lives of Kentucky's gifted and

talented children. She truly understands the importance of communicating the vital need for adequate resources for gifted education so these young people will be able to reach their optimal potential and have successful adult lives."

NAGC annually presents the David W. Belin Advocacy Award to an individual

supportive superintendent she knows toward gifted education. "Mr. Davis has always strived to meet the needs of gifted students in Bullitt County," Sarah said. "With each program and service delivery option that we have available to our students, he has based his suggestions and decisions on research-based practices in order to provide continuous learning for our high achieving students."

Since becoming superintendent in 2007, Keith has prioritized services to gifted students. In 2013 he was named a Service and Advocacy Award winner by KAGE. That same year, the Bullitt Advanced Math and Science Program (BAMS), a program for freshmen and sophomore students to accelerate their educational career so they graduate with an associ-

ate degree and high school diploma, was recognized by KAGE as a Model Service Option in Gifted Education.

Keith has been an integral part of The Center's Victoria Fellows, a group of superintendents and principals who are advocating for gifted children. He has also co-chaired a task force on gifted education that was appointed by the Commissioner of Education in Kentucky.

The Center for Gifted Studies congratulates Lynette Baldwin and Keith Davis.



Bullitt County Superintendent Keith Davis (from left), Kentucky Association for Gifted Education Executive Director Lynette Baldwin, and National Association for Gifted Children President George Betts

or group that has successfully advocated at the state or federal level to incorporate gifted education in a significant and meaningful way into state or federal education policy. The Center's own Julia Roberts was the first recipient of the award in 2001.

Keith Davis is the Superintendent of Bullitt County Public Schools and a long-time supporter of gifted education and The Center for Gifted Studies. District Gifted and Talented Coordinator Sarah Coomer wrote the award-winning application, in which she called Keith the most

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I would like to know more about including The Center for Gifted Studies in my estate plans.

I would like to talk to someone about other ways to support The Center (e.g., endowment, scholarships, specific programs, etc.).



SAM OLDENBURG

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JULIA ROBERTS

CALENDAR

Winter Super Saturdays

January 30,
February 6, 13, & 20, 2016

IdeaFestival BG

March 18, 2016

Spring Break in France

April 1-10, 2016

Kentucky Odyssey of the Mind Competition

April 2, 2016

Kentucky Recognition for Duke TIP

May 25, 2016

Camp Innovate

June 6-10, 2016

SCATS

June 12-24, 2016

VAMPY

June 26 – July 16, 2016

Advanced Placement Summer Institute

June 27 – July 1, 2016

Camp Explore

July 11-15, 2016

Travel in Ireland

September 30 – October 9, 2016