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Center for Gifted Studies

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This summer’s SCATS campers had a wonderful opportunity to listen to General Lloyd “Fig” Newton speak and answer their questions. General Newton was in Bowling Green as the honored guest of Aviation Heritage Park for its Breaking Barriers-themed Hangar Party. General Newton was the first African American to become a four-star general in the United States Air Force and the first African American pilot in the Thunderbirds squadron, an elite flying team. He flew 269 combat missions in Vietnam during his 34-year career.

General Newton shared his story with SCATS campers in the Gary Ransdell Auditorium after classes on June 14. He told of applying for the Thunderbirds but not making it the first time or the second time. However, undiscouraged by those who suggested he would never succeed, he applied a third time, resulting in a call congratulating him for being selected. His message to the SCATS campers was to “have big dreams and to follow them,” making decisions based on what they know best, not on what others are saying.

Reflecting on General Newton’s talk, one SCATS camper remarked, “Too often people give up on themselves and think their dreams are unreachable. Instead, they should push harder to do what will make them happy. Though the paths to success may be hard, they need to push on.”

The Center for Gifted Studies has strong ties to Aviation Heritage Park: both Julia Roberts and Bob Pitchford, a member of the Advisory Board for The Center and for The Gatton Academy, serve on the Board of Directors for Aviation Heritage Park.
Dear Friends of The Center for Gifted Studies,

Summer is an especially busy time at The Center, and it is my favorite time as it brings children and young people to Center programming for weeks at a time. Life is abuzz when Camp Explore, Camp Innovate, SCATS, and VAMPY are going full steam ahead.

Summer makes the generosity of Friends of The Center so obvious! Friends make it possible to support young people to participate in programs – well-qualified young people whose families could not otherwise afford for them to be part of these programs.

In addition to individual gifts to The Center, the Gheens Foundation and the Qatar Foundation International provided support. The Gheens Foundation created the Rhea P. Lazarus Scholars which allowed middle and high school students from Louisville to participate in SCATS and VAMPY. The Qatar Foundation International supported young people learning Arabic in VAMPY. Thank you to the Gheens Foundation and the Qatar International Foundation and to friends who point us to opportunities for foundation support.

Individuals who are Friends of The Center have created and supported scholarships that send young people to summer programs year after year. Those scholarships are often in memory of loved ones and in honor of special individuals. Some gifts are made to support young people in their specific communities, students in special circumstances, or students for a specific program.

Responses from the young people who get to participate in summer programs because they have financial assistance from a foundation or individual are similar:

- SCATS is my second home. It’s somewhere where I feel comfortable being myself. I’ve met so many people.
- At camp, I realized I could hold my own. That experience set me on a path of taking harder classes at school because I realized that I had more potential than I had thought.
- For a lot of my educational career, I’ve been “the smart one.” Once I went to VAMPY, I had to find my own identity beyond that. That’s really empowering.

I hope you will consider making gifts for young people to participate in Camp Explore, Camp Innovate, SCATS, or VAMPY in the summer of 2020 or Super Saturday next February and in the fall!

Sincerely,

Julia Link Roberts
Mahurin Professor for Gifted Studies
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.
One of the delights of providing the 37th year of SCATS, which was held June 9-21, was watching the children of former SCATS or VAMPY campers have their own experiences. We caught up with 2019’s second-generation campers during their first week to see how their summer was going.


Maggie McCloud (SCATS 2018-19) of Lexington is the daughter of Craig McCloud (SCATS 1989-90).

Caroline Moots (Summer Camp 2012, SCATS 2018-19, VAMPY 2019, Travel) of Kirksville, MO, is the daughter of Stacy Roberts Moots (SCATS 1983-84, Travel).

Cy Nash (Summer Camp 2013; SS 2013-14, 2017; SCATS 2018-19) of Bowling Green is the daughter of Catherine Nash (SCATS 1994).

Gracyn Phillips (SCATS 2019) of Loveland, OH, is the daughter of Brian Philipps (SCATS 1993-94).

Why did you come to SCATS — and if this is your second year, why did you come back?

Maggie: My dad made me come last year. I’d thought I’d be the only social one here and have to room with weird people. But at the end, when my mom picked me up, I didn’t want to leave! I’d made so many friends.

Cy: My mom and her brothers (Woods Nash [SCATS 1995-96] of Glasgow and Will Nash [SCATS 1997-98] of Lexington) really liked it, so they wanted me to come. Last year I said I’d try it out. I had a great experience, and now I’m here again!

Gracyn: My dad came here, and he had good memories. He told me about it, and I was like, “Let’s go!”

Asher: My mom told me that it was fun, so I attended last year. I had a blast and learned a lot of new things, so I came back.

What are some highlights from last year?

Connor: I really liked my suitemates and my roommate. I also liked taking Clowning.

Asher: I liked my bridge-building class. I also liked that we weren’t on technology the whole time, so we actually got social.
met a lot of new friends and kept in contact with some of them.
Maggie: I learned Chinese, how to travel on a budget, and all about the Salem witch trials.

What Optionals have you enjoyed this year?
Caroline: I did one called Two Weeks. They gave us pool noodles and balls. If someone hit you, you were out — it was like The Hunger Games.
Gracyn: I did the Great SCATS Baking Show. We watched The Great British Baking Show on Netflix and ate Oreo cakesters.
Asher: Definitely Capture the Flag!
Maggie: I love making friendship bracelets.

What have you learned this year?
Mina: I took SCATS Film School so I could learn how to edit. I did a documentary on the history of Nintendo.
Gracyn: I’ve learned a lot about different cultures and art, read a really good book called Fire Girl, learned about problem solving, and wrote a biography on one of my favorite YouTubers.
Caroline: I took Roller Coaster Physics, so I learned about types of energy. In Double Threat: Writing and Performing Original Monologues, I wrote a comedic monologue and a dramatic monologue.
Asher: I took Roller Coaster Physics, but I hate roller coasters. I’ve never been on one! I like the physics behind it.

The next SCATS will take place June 7-19, 2020.
This summer, the Arabic class at VAMPY was supported for the third year in a row by a generous grant from Qatar Foundation International (QFI), a member of the Qatar Foundation which is funded by the Qatari government. QFI sponsors programs that promote Arabic education and culture in the United States, and it found a willing and able group with the VAMPY students.

From June 13–July 13, campers explored a language and culture unfamiliar to them under the expert guidance of Morrocan native and WKU Arabic instructor Lhouie Guerwane, who has taught the course for seven years. Lhouie always shows unending delight in sharing his knowledge with his students. One day, when going over cardinal directions during a geography and vocabulary lesson, he extended his arms up, down, and to the sides to a catchy beat as the students said the words.

The first week of the course introduced the alphabet and the geography of Arabic countries. Later activities included singing Arabic songs, presenting on Arabic countries, and visiting a mosque and an Arabic market and restaurant in Nashville.

The course opened up the world for its students. Zachary VanderMolen (SS 2018, VAMPY 2019) said that learning Arabic “enables me to speak in a totally different place in the world.” Olivia Moore (SCATS 2016-17, VAMPY 2018-19) said, “It’s cool to have a language that isn’t provided in my school. I may study Arabic in college and then travel or do study abroad.”

First-time teaching assistant Noah Stevens (WSS 2007), a WKU graduate with a major in Arabic, was excited to be part of the course: “I’m happy to share with the students not only the language, which is an important tool that they’ll be able to use after class, but also the culture so that they can get a feel for the Arab world right here in Kentucky.”
Venice or Vienna – which city would be enjoyed most? Abigail Portman (VAMPY 2019) said choosing would not be possible. “Hearing about something in class is much different than actually seeing it. More than the art that covers Venice and Vienna that took my breath away, I will never forget the beauty and intricacy that Venice and Vienna have to offer. “Gillian Jamison (Super Saturdays 2012-13, Summer Camp 2013-14, Innovate 2015, SCATS 2017-18, VAMPY 2019) said, “I loved seeing the history come alive in the architecture of the buildings and beautiful paintings and sculpture. I particularly enjoying trying new foods and learning from the local people.”

Twenty young people and adults flew to Venice and then traveled by bus to Vienna for what was fall break in many schools. Venice was quite an experience, a place to take a ride in a gondola, witness the blowing of glass, and visit the palace of the Doge and St. Mark’s Basilica.

Claire Boggess (Super Saturdays 2016-19, Summer Camp 2014, Explore 2015-17, Innovate 2017, Travel) liked Venice best because it was quiet with no cars on the islands. Claire along with the others really enjoyed the gelato that was readily available. Tinsley Jamison (Explore 2015) said, “I liked Burano (Island) the best, because it was so pretty and had rows of tiny shops and cafes. If I went back again, I would want to visit Murano (Island) again to see more of the beautiful Italian glass. I also enjoyed seeing the different churches and comparing them.”

Janna Youngblood (SCATS 2015, VAMPY 2018-19) listed the cruise on the Danube as her favorite experience of the traveling: “Not only did the cruise give me great views of the mountains, castles, and churches, but it also let me talk to other people on the trip. This trip gave me a new perspective on life that I will never forget.”

Isabel Harper remarked, “I particularly enjoyed our visit to the monastery in Melk, Austria. I never knew a church could be so beautiful and have a history so complex.”

No doubt, the visit to the stables of the Spanish Riding School and seeing a performance of the Lipizzaner stallions were events enjoyed by all. Since the shows are not offered daily, it was a rare opportunity that allowed our group to see the horses perform.

Travel offers experiences that put the study of history, art, and culture into life. Come travel to Italy with The Center for Gifted Studies April 3-12, 2020.
Sam Boggs (Super Saturdays 2010-11, 2013; SCATS 2013; VAMPY 2014-16) has attained the rank of Eagle Scout. He graduated from high school in 2018 and is studying history at the University of Alabama in Huntsville.

Karen Demski (VAMPY 1989-91) is a psychotherapist of Marietta, GA.

My memories of these camps are still amazing. They allowed me to feel comfortable being “smart” and “nerdy” about school stuff. I made great friends, learned about punk music, and found my individuality at VAMPY.

Alix Heintzman (Super Saturdays 1999-2000), a Berea graduate, has authored her first book entitled The Ten Thousand Doors of January under the name of Alix E. Harrow. Published by Redhook, an imprint of the Hachette Book Group, it was named an Amazon best book of 2019, and a review from NPR says: “It will lead you on a journey through books within books, worlds within worlds, mysteries within mysteries, until, finally, you reach a deep breath taken after a perfectly satisfying last page.”

Super Saturdays was my first experience on a college campus, when I was nine or ten. By fifteen I was taking classes on South Campus and discovering the love of historical narratives and storytelling that would lead to grad school and adjuncting and, eventually, my debut novel. I’m so grateful to The Center for feeding my curiosities and passion, and so excited to keep telling stories.

Amelia Kolb (SCATS 2009-10; VAMPY 2011), who graduated from WKU in May with a degree in Spanish, has earned a Fulbright grant to teach English in Mexico. Amelia’s interest in teaching English is rooted in her work with Doors to Hope, an organization offering ESL and GED classes to Latinx families in Louisville. While at WKU, Amelia served as chapter president of Alpha Xi Delta and as an immigration case manager intern at the International Center of Kentucky. She also volunteered in Costa Rica and Belize and studied in Peru and Mexico. After her Fulbright year, she plans to pursue a career teaching English language learners in the U.S. and abroad.

Rebecca Wei Li (VAMPY 1999-2002; Counselor 2005) graduated from Carnegie Mellon with a degree in chemical engineering in 2008. She works in Houston, TX, as an asset integrity analyst at PinnacleART, which provides comprehensive support across the areas of mechanical integrity, asset reliability, and inspection services.

Sarah Markham Lawrence (VAMPY 1988-90) was professionally recognized in two significant ways recently. First, she was elected president of the national Pharmacy Technician Educators Council (PTEC) for 2019. PTEC members instruct and administer in a variety of educational settings across the United States and Canada. Second, she was honored with the Roy Kemp Award from PTEC, presented to a member who has “demonstrated a valued contribution to the education of pharmacy technicians” and “demonstrated their commitment to pharmacy technician education through their participation in PTEC activities.” (For Sarah’s contributions to the community, check out the Friends page.)

Emily Powell (Super Saturdays 2006-08; SCATS 2009; VAMPY 2010-11; Counselor 2014-15; Head Counselor 2016-17) of Sunnyvale, CA, earned a BS in business administration and hospitality and tourism management from the College of Charleston in 2017. She is currently a contracted event planner for Apple. She recently became engaged to fellow alum Andrew Thomas (VAMPY 2008-11; Counselor 2014).
Summer at The Center is always a special time, but this summer sparkled even more because of the presence of the ever-smiling, always enthusiastic Nika Stradovnik, a 25-year-old graduate student from Slovenia who visited The Center for five weeks to learn about our summer programming. Whether unloading the luggage of arriving campers, observing classes, touring Nashville, or baking Slovenian treats for a Center potluck dinner, Nika immersed herself in the culture of The Center.

Nika is working on her master's degree in inclusive pedagogy focusing on gifted studies at University of Primorska in Koper, Slovenia. She met Tracy Inman at the 2017 International Conference of Talent Education in Slovenia and later asked if she could observe our camps, with Tracy serving as her mentor, in order to create a similar program in her home country where such opportunities are not common.

Nika's passion for gifted education is influenced by her own experiences: "I was not really part of my classroom when I was in primary school because I was gifted, and that's why I know it's important to feel a part of things. I want gifted children to have that chance in Slovenia." She was impressed at how quickly campers bonded this summer: "When the VAMPY campers came, they instantly connected."

To create a gifted camp in Slovenia, Nika will use her experiences from The Center and her experience organizing a two-day camp for gifted children in 2018. She has also been a scout leader for ten years. These combine to make a strong foundation.

Nika was thrilled by what she saw this summer: "I can't believe that I had this opportunity to come here and to observe everything and to learn so much. What I really love here is that you have really great teachers. They include so much differentiation, have so many materials around the classroom, and work with students one-on-one. In Slovenia, teachers would say, 'This is impossible,' but here I see that it is possible."

It is easy to believe that for Nika, anything is possible because her attitude is so positive. When asked if she is always as upbeat as she was this summer, she replied, "I am always happy. I know what I can do and what I can't, and life is so much nicer with that mindset."
VAMPY students grow as learners by focusing on one academic topic for three weeks, but they also grow socially and emotionally because of our commitment to supporting the whole child. One key factor in that social-emotional growth is our counselors who know what it is like to grow up gifted. Since almost all of them attended our camps themselves, they also know what VAMPY can do for its campers and share the belief that it is a place like no other. This background enables them to create an environment where every camper can thrive.

The 2019 head counselors at VAMPY, which ran June 23-July 13, were Tori Edwardson (SCATS 2009, VAMPY 2010-13, Counselor 2016-17, Head Counselor 2018-19) and Molly Rush (SCATS 2010, VAMPY 2012, Counselor 2017-18, Head Counselor 2019). They wanted campers to experience the same kind of transformation they did as campers.

Tori recalled, “At school I was very closed off. I had two or three really good friends, but I’d never broken past a certain barrier of relationships. At VAMPY, I found my truest friends because I was able to get past that surface level almost immediately because it’s such a welcoming place.”

Molly said her experience at camp was similar to Tori’s: “At school, I didn’t fit in with any specific groups — I was that outlier friend who could get along with everyone but didn’t have close friends. Then I went to SCATS and VAMPY, and it was such a different environment with so many people I could get along with. It felt so natural.”

For both Tori and Molly, their relationships with their counselors were significant. Molly notes that “the counselors were a huge, huge part of my experience.” Tori says, “I went to my counselors for everything, and even when I was going to college, I would reach out to them and ask, ‘Do you have any advice? I’m really nervous.’”

Knowing the role counselors can play for campers, Tori and Molly approached their jobs thoughtfully and creatively, making a space conducive for developing relationships and social skills. Molly explained, “A lot of what we do as counselors is to say to each other, ‘You have this extroverted kid who’s interested in this topic. I have this really introverted kid who talked to me during room checks about the same topic, so maybe we can get them together.’”

Counselor orientation this year also involved developing skills for addressing campers’ mental health issues. Molly explained, “We’ve become more aware and understanding of the anxiety or mild depression that some of these kids are experiencing. There’s no reason for us to ever think that we are qualified therapists, but if they’re homesick or having specific anxieties, we can use skills to get them to a place where they feel more comfortable.”

Tori added, “We can observe and listen, and we can ask them in private, ‘Is this something that needs to be addressed?’ We learned how to talk to campers to make them feel seen and heard, to empathize with them, and validate them.”

The best part of counseling for both Tori and Molly is to see their campers changing. Molly said, “It’s really nice to see the growth of my kids over the span of camp and over multiple years of camp. This year, I picked campers up from the airport, and some of them seemed to have grown three feet and could have an adult conversation with me.”

Tori sometime surprised herself with how strong her feelings were about her campers: “One of my SCATS campers from my first year used to talk to me about how much she wanted to get into The Gatton Academy. One night Molly and I went to visit her hall, and she said, ‘I got into Gatton!’ I just started crying. I was so proud. I get to see these kids have the same growth in confidence in academics that I had when I was a camper. It’s amazing to watch.”

The next VAMPY will take place June 21-July 11, 2020.

PHOTO BY LILY THOMPSON
Sarah Lawrence Recognized as Finalist for Service Award

Sarah M. Lawrence (VAMPY 1988-90) was recognized by her employer, Sullivan University, earlier this year as one of four finalists for the Sullivan University Spirit of Service Award, which recognizes Sullivan University faculty and staff for outstanding volunteer efforts in the community. Sarah, her husband David, and sons Henry and Sam are involved in homeless outreach, and made over 1500 sandwiches and 400 snack bags in 2018 as part of an outreach crew in her home city of Louisville. In addition, she and her family have spent countless hours fundraising for the Riley Jane Lawrence Scholarship Fund for The Center for Gifted Studies, raising $16,180 in 2018!

As part of their fundraising efforts, Sarah and her sons have been busy creating and selling art. In 2018, they sold their creations at the Louisville Open Air Fair and through Facebook, selling over 40 paintings and 100 Christmas ornaments. Their efforts raised more than $800 for Riley’s Scholarship, which is awarded annually to a gifted student who could not otherwise afford to participate in the VAMPY summer program. (Check out the Alumni Update for more news about Sarah.)
Member of the Kentucky House of Representatives and WKU history professor Dr. Patti Minter delivered a message of hope and encouragement to this year’s honorees at the Kentucky Recognition Ceremony of the Duke Talent Identification Program (Duke TIP) on May 22 at Western Kentucky University. “As you look toward the future,” she told them, “I urge all of you to follow your passion and listen to both your head and your heart about where your journey will take you. And then, go for it!”

Patti concluded her keynote by telling the students, “Those of you in this room are on the cutting edge of your generation. And the paths you choose will shape your journey and that of the world around you. I cannot wait to see what all of you will do on your journeys to discovering great things — and discovering who you are.”

Duke TIP’s 7th Grade Talent Search identifies students across a 16-state region who have scored at or above the 95th percentile on a grade-level achievement test as a 6th grader. These students next take the ACT or SAT to learn more about their abilities. Duke TIP holds recognition ceremonies to honor those who score the highest. In Kentucky, out of the 2,038 students who tested, 752 students (37 percent) qualified to attend the state ceremony hosted by The Center for Gifted Studies since 1982. The Kentucky Education Savings Plan Trust (KESPT) sponsored the reception that followed.

The ceremony began with a welcome from Dr. Julia Roberts, followed by remarks from Kathie Anderson, Gifted Education Academic Program Consultant for the Kentucky Department of Education.

Duke TIP Outreach Specialist Rick Courtright praised the students’ accomplishments and distributed medallions to all the students for state recognition, as well as additional medallions to those who had scored high enough to receive grand recognition.

Samuel Griggs of Berea, who had never been out of the Berea-Lexington area, attended with his mother, who said she was “very proud. He’s been smart ever since he’s been in the world.” Because of the future accomplishments of Samuel and his fellow honorees, the future is a bright one.
Students who had finished first through third grade spent the week of June 3-7 at Camp Explore learning about the concept of patterns across the disciplines of art, science, clowning, language arts, and math. One pattern easily spotted was that of returning campers and teachers who had enjoyed their experience so much last year that they were back for more.

Landon Sigler (Super Saturdays 2018-19) of Bowling Green returned for a second year of camp because, “All my memories of last year were good.” On the first day of Language Arts, he and his classmates read *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs* with teacher Shelly Jones of Prospect and came up with ideas for characters for their own stories. The project pleased returning camper Charlie Murphy of Bowling Green who “loves writing stories.” Shelly not only wanted her students “to be able to see themselves as writers” but also to “think about story structure in terms of patterns. It’s like literary theory for kids.”

Offering students new learning opportunities is central to Camp Explore. When asked about his choice to attend for a second year, Cole Hudson of Radcliff explained, “I came last year because I wanted to get to bring my lunch, which I don’t get to do at school, but then in Language Arts I got to build a robot that delivered medicine to people, so I wanted to come back this year!”

In Art, teacher Morgan Conwell of Bowling Green was happy to be back for her second year because “you can slow down and talk to students one on one.” She also loves listening to them: “Two boys were talking to each other while they painted, and one said, ‘I really like koalas, and I’d love to go on a trip to Australia. If I go, I’ll bring back a koala for you.’ It was nice to see that kindness.”

This year’s math teacher, Lori Darnell of Bowling Green, was new to Camp Explore but quickly learned about its pattern of providing social-emotional support as well as learning opportunities for gifted students. In one first-day class session, a student announced she had lost a tooth the previous night while another needed a hug. Then it was on to a preassessment activity to prepare the class for learning concepts like graphing, perimeter, and area that they would need to design their own toy stores. She reminded the class, “It’s okay if you think this is kind of hard, because that means you’re going to learn a lot of stuff!”

Patterns Are Everywhere at Camp Explore
On the second day of camp, returning camper Nemsiah Nuam of Bowling Green was busy in Science, which is her favorite class “because I get to make stuff.” Under the guidance of Warren County teacher Lyndsey Duke, she and her classmates learned about towers by looking at famous structures like the Eiffel Tower and discussing the patterns of shapes involved. Then Lyndsey challenged teams of three to build a freestanding tower with straws, tape, and scissors.

In Clowning, campers looked at patterns in juggling. Bowling Green’s Nick Wilkins, also known as Broadway the Clown, has the most years of experience teaching at Camp Explore (he also has taught at SCATS for around 30 years), and it is clear why he keeps coming back: his passion is helping campers discover that they can do what at first they think they cannot.

Returning camper Abby Buser (Super Saturdays 2018-19) clearly had developed some juggling skills last summer because she moved quickly from working with one bean bag to three, which she managed to juggle for several seconds. Meanwhile, fellow alum Naw Day of Bowling Green found two bags tricky, so Nick worked with her until she got it. “It isn’t hard,” he said. “It just takes practice.”

The bean bags fell and rose, and the campers tossed and caught and dropped and tried again. They were making a pattern, just like Camp Explore, where excellent teachers and excited students arrive — and often return — each year to be inspired by learning. It’s the best pattern of all!

The next Camp Explore will take place July 13-17, 2020.
This summer at Camp Innovate, held July 8-12, the spirit of innovation was at work not only in what was taught but how it was taught. We wanted our high-ability, high-interest third through fifth graders to have the power to learn as much as they wanted and as much as they were able.

Former Warren County principal Mary Evans used student choice in her Language Arts class to give her students a variety of opportunities to express themselves. On one class day, she read a book about taking care of the ocean. She then lead the students in a discussion of how humans harm the ocean, such as by littering, and final drawing. “Think about how your object is connected to your background,” Andi said. The students’ common task resulted in a wide variety of pictures because they made choices about subject, style, and technique.

Teachers at Camp Innovate incorporate many activities not only because their students are a wiggly, singing, bouncing group but because those activities get students observing, wondering, and discovering. In Math, for example, Kierra Chandler of Bowling Green taught students about probability by having them analyze whether or not a dice game was fair.

had them think of alternatives to single-use items, like using cloth napkins instead of paper. Next, they brainstormed in small groups about ways to reuse single-use objects. Ideas included making a plastic soda bottle into an hourglass and plastic bottle rings into bracelets.

For the last part of class, students chose from multiple project ideas focusing on whatever topic and product interested them such as a drawing or a poem. Because they could choose, they stayed engaged and pursued ideas that intrigued them.

In art class, Andi Rudloff of Bowling Green and Nashville also used student choice. For one project, students sat at tables designated for their preferred style: abstract, representational, or abstract-representational. They used pastels to sketch out ideas in notebooks for a picture of a food they are passionate about such as sushi, pancakes, or pizza. When ready, students used watercolor paper for their

As the students played in pairs, rolling dice and keeping track of points, they soon observed Player A had more chances to score than Player B, making the game unfair. Kierra asked each pair to determine one change they could make to the rules to make the game fair and test out their change. By testing, observing, and analyzing, the students experienced — and learned — the concept of probability.

In Clowning, teacher Nick Wilkins introduced juggling on the second day of
camp. At first, juggling may seem to be all about hand-eye coordination, but analysis is also essential. Students had to understand, for instance, why they needed to throw a beanbag at an angle rather than straight up, and why they needed to toss to head level rather than up to the ceiling.

When one student made a big improvement, Nick joked, “Your wife will be very impressed — I mean, your mother.” The students giggled, and then they kept juggling — testing, applying, and rethinking their ideas as well as their bodies.

In Science, testing concepts is also essential. Warren County educator Amelia Watkins had her class learn about Newton’s Laws using a wooden ruler, a ping pong ball, and a golf ball. First, they talked about how the balls were different. Then, each small team bent a ruler back the same amount for each type of ball and observed how the responses from each ball differed. Next, they adjusted how much to bend the ruler so they could achieve the same acceleration with each ball.

After writing down their observations, they analyzed what they had seen. The students enjoyed flicking their rulers to send the balls rolling around the classroom, but they also were able to answer questions about force, mass, and acceleration.

Minds-on, hands-on activities like these give gifted students the power to go as far and as fast in their learning as they want.

The next Camp Innovate will be held July 6-10, 2020.

The Challenge | Fall 2019
The Gatton Academy is known for drawing talented STEM students from every corner of the Commonwealth. However, its young people possess a diverse set of talents, so the student body also includes accomplished artists, musicians, writers, and performers.

Even while providing each student with incredible pathways to advanced STEM learning and career opportunities, The Gatton Academy works to nurture students’ multiple artistic talents. The year 2019 has been especially critical for the arts at the school; developments on several fronts have made the program’s rounded education stronger than ever.

**Art in Florence Schneider Hall**

On New Year’s Day 2019, Bowling Green attorney and art collector Harvey Johnston brought to The Gatton Academy several paintings by Joe Downing, an internationally celebrated late-twentieth-century artist from western Kentucky. As he looked around the walls of the student lobby and Great Hall to see where the works might hang, Harvey’s mind seemed to spin with opportunities.

Since that day, Harvey has gifted 40 individual pieces of art to The Gatton Academy, including 29 pieces by Downing, five paintings by former WKU art professor and department head Neil Peterie, and two paintings by former WKU art professor and department head Leo Fernandez.

“I think that it is important that young people—and especially students who are focused on math and science—be exposed and appreciate the humanities as well: in particular art,” Harvey said. “Viewing and appreciating art can have a soothing effect and provide a calmness to young people as they deal with their routine academic load.”

Among the Downing pieces are early works from the artist that are evocatively different from the abstract, color-driven works most associated with the modernist painter. These unusual pieces include three drawings of abstract faces, instantly reminiscent of Picasso, now in The Gatton Academy lobby.

Also now on display for students are several Downing stapleages. These rare pieces are composed of materials found in an office environment where Downing worked before becoming a full-time painter, including scraps of paper cut into abstract shapes and then stapled into a stacked form. The term *stapelage* derives from the staples themselves that prominently hold the works together.

As the first of these artworks were being hung on the walls of The Gatton Academy lobby and Great Hall in April, students stopped to admire them even as they rushed to class.

“Since the opening of Schneider Hall as home to The Gatton Academy and The Center for Gifted Studies, I have dreamed of having art throughout the building,” said Julia Roberts, executive director of both Gatton Academy and The Center. “Art inspires and motivates students who live in the building, staff who work here, and visitors who come our way. I am grateful for the art that has been gifted to us!”

**Walker Rutledge Piano**

Another major advancement in 2019 has been the fundraising for and acquisition of a new grand piano for the student lobby. While there has always been a piano to play...
since the program’s 2007 opening, The Gatton Academy raised money this past spring to replace its much-loved former piano.

An initial challenge gift was secured with the intent to match additional gifts dollar-for-dollar to fund the purchase of a quality replacement piano. WKU’s Spirit-Funder platform was used to reach alumni, current parents, alumni parents, and those in the Gatton Academy community who care about the program and music. In total, 75 additional gifts were received during the May crowdfunding campaign, surpassing the $15,000 matching challenge goal.

The new piano was rolled into the lobby late this summer just in time for the start of the school year. It is a seven-foot Steinway B Walnut grand piano, an incredible, top-of-the-line instrument for talented young musicians to practice on. It is a piano poised to last for many decades of Gatton Academy students.

The new instrument is already a fixture in the lobby. Current senior Norman Chan said, “I play every day. It’s something that I really appreciate about Gatton.”

The piano was named the Walker Rutledge Piano at a dedication ceremony in mid-August. Professor Rutledge, who retired earlier this year after 50 years of teaching WKU English courses, has a special relationship with the school, having taught some 350 Gatton Academy students, most through the program’s English literature study abroad program. In addition to his role as professor, Walker is also a talented jazz pianist.

Unplugging with the Arts

Finally, during summer 2019, The Gatton Academy hosted its fourth iteration of Unplugging with the Arts, a partnership program with Louisville’s Speed Museum. The program is meant to help Gatton Academy students unwind — and unplug — after an intense school year in the program’s STEM curriculum by immersing themselves in the arts for three days at the Speed Museum and locations in and around Louisville.

This summer, students met artists from eclectic backgrounds, including painters, writers, curators, and musicians. They participated in workshops directly with the artists and spent time engaging with art in the Speed Museum galleries.

Among the artists they met was renowned Kentucky sculptor Ed Hamilton, who visited with the students at the Speed Museum to talk about his work on display in the museum’s galleries before the group headed off to downtown Louisville where Hamilton showed students his prominent public pieces Lincoln on the Waterfront and York.

Gatton Academy senior Abrar Rahman (Super Saturdays 2008-16; SCATS 2015) of Cave City participated in the program. “I never enjoyed art the way I do now,” he said. “Unplugging with the Arts changed my perspective as a whole, especially after viewing Ed Hamilton’s well-known pieces in Louisville with him. I’d seen those since I was a child, but now I spend more time to stop and smell the roses.”
The National STEM Scholar Program, funded by the National Stem Cell Foundation, offers opportunities to enhance learning in middle school science classes across the United States. Opportunities include a week of professional learning experiences at Western Kentucky University, a challenge project in each National STEM Scholar’s classroom, and participation in the National Science Teachers Association Conference.

Ten middle school science teachers are selected each year to be National STEM Scholars. The first four cohorts represent 23 states. The deadline for applying for the fifth cohort is February 1, 2020.

National STEM Scholars spend the time at WKU learning with Rico Tyler and Kerrie McDaniel. They engage in minds-on, hands-on learning that they can implement in their middle school science classrooms. Throughout the year, the Scholar plans a challenge project which is something he or she has wanted to do and now has the financial and professional support to implement.

Scholars have been able to participate in two additional opportunities this year. The first was a launch of a payload into space. The launch was the culmination of “on Earth” experiments conducted in Scholar classrooms across the United States to determine the amount of weight a marshmallow could withstand on earth before being crushed. From these experiments, students made predictions about how this would change in space. On May 2, Marvin “the Mallownaut” was launched into space onboard Blue Origin’s New
Shepard suborbital rocket. Students were able to watch the live feed from a camera inside the payload, which was designed by WKU faculty members Rico and Kerrie and WKU student Liam Seymour with the WKU Makerspace.

This fall, the Scholars and their students also were able to engage in a Downlink with the International Space Station. The National STEM Scholars’ students submitted questions to be posed to the astronauts, vetted by NASA, and then asked to astronauts by students from Kentucky schools who were in attendance at the Kentucky Science Center for the live interview with Nick Hague and Drew Morgan. The interview can be viewed at https://youtu.be/FFW_NcUnsL0.

Julia Roberts, project director, said, “The partnership of the National Stem Cell Foundation with The Gatton Academy has been marvelous for the National STEM Scholars, their students, and our staff who have worked with them. Thank you, Paula Grisanti, for these exceptional opportunities that the National Stem Cell Foundation provides!”
The 23rd Biennial World Conference of the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children (WCGTC) was hosted by the WCGTC Executive Committee and The Center for Gifted Studies at Western Kentucky University. Tyler Clark, Executive Administrator, and Julia Roberts, President, served as co-hosts of the World Conference. The conference brought 760 participants from 45 countries to Nashville July 24-28. Participants shared and learned together during nine preconference workshops, six keynote addresses, and more than 300 parallel sessions, posters, and symposia, as well as the general business meeting and delegates meeting.

The theme for the conference was A World of Possibilities: Gifts, Talents, and Potential. The theme represents the need to work together to solve the challenges to gifted education in every country to ensure that students are able to realize their potential and develop their gifts and talents.

Conference participant Rae Lymer, gifted education specialist for Baltimore City Public Schools, highlighted the spirit of sharing and learning together that is representative of the World Conference. In her reaction to a keynote address by Dr. Shelya Blumen of Pontifica Universidad Catolica of Perú, Rae stated, “Dr. Blumen talked about the diversity of the community in Perú and how that has impacted and challenged the building of gifted education programs and services.
We experience a similar situation in Baltimore, and we’ve had to take a grassroots effort similar to the one in Peru in order to bring gifted into all of our schools. But we’re still not there.”

Another conference participant, Madlena Arakelyan from Armenia, commented, “The conference program was very diverse and rich. I have gained knowledge of all the narrow and broad areas of my interests: identification, social-emotional issues, creativity, and STEAM. The warm and open atmosphere of the conference provided an opportunity to interact with the authors and discuss the topic in more detail.”

The connections Madlena made at the World Conference will allow her to collaborate internationally with new colleagues to share ideas and coauthor publications that will advance the field of gifted education and talent development. She already has plans for work with colleagues from China, Germany, Turkey, and the USA.

Madlena’s experience is what the World Conference is all about: Bringing together diverse perspectives from across the globe to enact change. To achieve this goal, the program was designed to allow individuals from around the world to share work they are doing in their own countries to help gifted students achieve their potential. Their presentations provided insight to others who can incorporate new ideas to improve their own work.

Conference attendees also had the opportunity to experience The Music City at the World Conference when the final conference dinner was held at the Wildhorse Saloon in downtown Nashville. Participants enjoyed the Southern foods, music, line dancing, and a time to visit with others from around the globe.

The Center and members of the WKU community at large were involved in numerous ways in the World Conference. Many faculty and staff members made presentations including Julia, Lynette Breedlove, Tracy Inman, Pamela Jukes, Lisa Murley, Andrea Paganelli, Antonia Szymanski, Janet Tassell, and Zack Ryle, as well as several students and Wade Vierheller (VAMPY 2011; Counselor) residential counselor from The Gatton Academy. The opening ceremony featured welcoming remarks from Corinne Murphy, dean of the WKU College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, and a musical program planned by Wayne Pope, professor in the WKU Department of Music. As part of the musical performance, Center alumna Caroline Wedge (Summer Camp 2012-13; Super Saturdays 2015; SCATS 2016-17; VAMPY 2019) and Elizabeth Moots (Summer Camp 2012; SCATS 2017; VAMPY 2019, Travel) sang “For Good” from Wicked. Several alumni of the WKU Department of Music also performed. Throughout the conference, Friends of The Center volunteered, and the staff of The Center were instrumental in making the conference run smoothly. A special thank you goes out to Regina Braun, Mary Evans, Gail Hiles, Tracy Inman, Jesse Knifely, Erika Solberg, Dick Roberts, and Lily Thompson.

For more information about the WCGTC, visit www.world-gifted.org
First-time and veteran Advanced Placement (AP) teachers spent June 24-28 on the WKU campus for The Center’s 2019 AP Summer Institute, offered in coordination with the College Board. Almost 450 teachers participated in 21 workshops for beginners and five workshops for experienced teachers with topics ranging from Psychology to Spanish Language and Culture. In addition, an AP Coordinator Workshop on June 26 helped teachers learn how to successfully manage their schools’ AP program.

With instruction from top-rate consultants, many of whom have served as graders for the exam, the program provided teachers with information on the structure and content of the test, resources to use with their students, and activities to prepare them for the year ahead.

Every workshop included participants with a variety of backgrounds. In the Calculus AB Experienced course, Vera Priddy of Cecilia had taught the class since 2007, while Erin Bird of Elizabethtown was preparing for just her second year of teaching.
Despite these differences, they both found much to gain from the week. Vera said, “So much has changed in terms of the wording of the questions, so this institute has been very beneficial, even for somebody who’s been teaching a long time.”

Erin appreciated learning from fellow participants as well as the consultant: “I love hearing from experienced teachers who’ve been in the game a lot longer — how they view things, how they approach different concepts and topics. I’m looking forward to being pushed so that when I go back, I can push my students even farther.”

Many of the Institute’s consultants return again and again to teach for us, but we also have highly-recommended newcomers ready to bring their own knowledge and enthusiasm to the experience. In the AP World History workshop, new consultant Kara Macsuga of Riviera Beach, FL, came in with 16 years of experience teaching the course to high school students. Her challenge was to prepare teachers for a drastically changed course. She explained, “We cut 9,000 years of our curriculum and expanded the scope in terms of expectations of non-Europeans.” Teachers had to adapt quickly because the changes had been made less than a year ago. Kara more than rose to the challenge; one participant commented, “Kara is a wealth of information and a great leader!” and another said she “did an excellent job and was extremely approachable.”

For Joe Mancino of Windsor, CT, this year was his third as one of our consultants. He has embraced the whole landscape of the Institute, whether by using VAMPY students to demonstrate ramps or by having participants drop Slinkys from the top floor of the Downing Student Union to learn about the transfer of energy. He said, “I like the diversity of teachers and what they bring to the classroom. I always come with a ton of stuff to teach them, and I always walk away having learned something. There’s a lab that I’ve done with hundreds of teachers and students, and I thought I’d seen every possible iteration, but this week some folks solved it in a way that I would never have come up with. That kind of innovation is what keeps me coming back.”

All in all, whether new or returning, whether a participant or a consultant, the majority of those attending this year’s Institute found it a week well spent. “I got a much-needed shot in the arm of new ideas and renewal of my motivation,” commented one teacher. It was an “excellent, invaluable experience,” said another. A third summed up the experience this way: “Amazing workshop! I will be back.”

The 2020 AP Institute will be June 22-26. The Center will offer an AP Institute in St. Louis July 13-16.
CELEBRATE KAGE’S 40TH

GIVE BIRTHDAY GIFTS TO THE KAGE FOUNDATION AND CHANGE LIVES

For 35 of KAGE’s 40 years, The KAGE Foundation has provided $238,725 to 682 deserving young scholars to attend summer camps in Kentucky. That money has come from gifts of many generous people.

For the donor, it may be five minutes writing a check or donating online. For the gifted young person, it is a lifetime of opportunity. Take Dr. Kirstin Hamblin Squint, an award-winning author and associate professor in North Carolina, for example.

Thanks to the KAGE Foundation, she left her impoverished rural community in 1986 to attend VAMPY: “Neither of my parents went to college. At that point, no one in my family had gone to college whom I knew. And I was meeting children of lawyers and college professors and people who were going to magnet schools in Louisville and just people from socio-economic and educational backgrounds that were so different from mine. By becoming friends with those people and realizing the way that I had felt different from my classmates and my community, I didn't feel so isolated anymore.”

That year she took Expository Writing with John Hagaman: “I remember writing a piece about my grandmother, and we did peer reviews with our classmates, and I had never had any kind of formal writing training — honestly, very few seventh graders have that — but that class was very powerful for me. Of course I took other interesting classes, but that one to me was life-changing because of who I am intellectually.”

VAMPY opened Kirstin’s eyes to so many opportunities: Finding a community where there were more similarities than differences, realizing that college – and a doctoral degree – could be a reality, even emboldening her to pursue her dream of writing. She explained, “VAMPY exposed me to a world that I had never been in contact with before. It was such a transformational experience for me. It’s hard to measure the impact that it had on me.”

VAMPY would not have been a possibility for Kirstin if not for the KAGE Foundation. Academic summer experiences are not possibilities for hundreds of young people without help from friends.

Celebrate KAGE’s 40th birthday by giving birthday gifts to the KAGE Foundation. It only takes a few minutes to change a life. Go to kagegifted.org/donate. Please join us at the KAGE Annual Conference February 24-25, 2020, in Lexington, KY.

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IdeaFestival BowlingGreen  
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Spring Break in Italy  
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National STEM Scholar Program  
May 31 – June 6, 2020

SCATS  
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VAMPY  
June 21 – July 11, 2020

Advanced Placement Summer Institute at WKU  
June 22-26, 2020

Pre-AP Institute at WKU  
June 29 – July 2, 2020

Camp Innovate  
July 6-10, 2020

Camp Explore  
July 13-17, 2020

Advanced Placement Summer Institute at Ritenour High School in St. Louis, MO  
July 13-16, 2020