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Western Kentucky University, gifted@wku.edu

Tracy Inman Editor

Western Kentucky University, tracy.inman@wku.edu

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the Challenge

Magazine for The Center for Gifted Studies

SERVICE TO OTHERS:
LIVING LIVES AND LEAVING LEGACIES

The Mody Endowed Fund in Service Learning

Drs. Bharat and Bharati Mody made a commitment to The Center this summer – one that will encourage others to make a difference in their communities. The Mody Endowed Fund in Service Learning transfers the Modys’ lifelong commitment to serving their communities and hopes to spark a passion for volunteerism among high achieving young people.

The Mody family has long supported the vision and mission of The Center. Both Mody daughters attended SCATS — Bhavana in 1991 and Bhavini in 1993-94. Bharat served on our inaugural Advisory Board in 2001 through 2008. In 2001, he and his wife (with support and ideas from their daughters) established the Doctors Mody Minority Scholarship for VAMPY. He explained, “We have felt that minority students do not get the same exposure and opportunity as others. They have a desire and a will but often do not have the means to fulfill that desire.” Additionally, they have donated original art to adorn Florence Schneider Hall and to auction for funding.

The Modys have a lifelong history of service that started long before our paths crossed almost thirty years ago. Here is their story in Bharat’s own words:



Our journey began in the late sixties after finishing medical schooling in India. Like many youngsters, we decided to explore other parts of the world. Like many immigrants, we packed one suitcase each and a little pocket money then left for England. We were nervous, but not concerned as we had two good things with us: a good education provided by our parents and good values taught by them.

After a year and half, we decided to come to the United States and landed in New York. In the early seventies, we were fortunate to get excellent training in surgery and obstetrics/ gynecology in Nashville, TN. By the late seventies, we decided to settle in Glasgow, KY, and that has been our home since then.

(Continued on page 26)

Letter from Julia



Dear Friends of The Center for Gifted Studies,

Tradition and Change! The year 2020 ushered in lots of change, and we at The Center for Gifted Studies have endeavored to keep traditions alive amid the changes. As we move into a new school year, opportunities all seem to be laced with tradition and change.

We learned how engaging online teaching can be from our experiences of offering SCATS, Camp Innovate, and Camp Explore online. We received kudos from consultants and teachers who were involved with the Advanced Placement Summer Institute that we provided virtually. Offering these opportunities virtually was new to us, and online experiences are likely to become a staple for The Center, yet we know that nothing replaces SCATS and VAMPY on the campus of WKU.

We will plan for next summer to duplicate camps as we have known them – full of tradition and fun in Bowling Green.

As a revenue-dependent unit (we raise our own funding) at Western Kentucky University, it is very important for you to think about The Center for Gifted Studies as you consider gifts for 2020. Gifts create opportunities. Some of your gifts provide financial assistance for children coming to Camp Explore and Camp Innovate and for young people participating in SCATS and VAMPY. Financial support is necessary for those with the capability to participate but whose families need help in order to make participation in The Center's programs possible.

Please stay informed about opportunities The Center will offer virtually this fall and help us spread the word. The Berta Seminar, focusing on the social-emotional development of gifted children, will be available virtually. Super Saturdays for children in grades 1-6 will be available via the internet, too. Remember, geography doesn't limit participation when opportunities are offered online.

Thank you for being a friend of The Center for Gifted Studies!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in red ink that reads "Julia Link Roberts". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Julia Link Roberts
Mahurin Professor for Gifted Studies

THE LOSS OF A FRIEND: DR. REBECCA SHADOWEN

Dr. Rebecca Shadowen, an infectious disease specialist and health care epidemiologist in Bowling Green, KY, was well respected in her local community, the Commonwealth of Kentucky, and beyond. On March 13 she posted a pro-mask message on Facebook: "If you could save the life of another person without harming your own, would you?" On September 11 she passed away after a four-month battle with COVID-19. She continued to attend meetings of the Bowling Green-

Warren County Coronavirus Workgroup from her hospital bed. She was the consummate professional.

She shared her expertise with many, including educators and children when The Center for Gifted Studies had a multiyear grant that included curriculum which required an understanding of the spread of a virus. As the mother of twins Jesse and Katie (SCATS 2010), she knew exactly how to reach these sixth graders in her presentations: through humor and gore

– she teased about sharing slides that may make them queasy, capturing their attention immediately!

CNN and the *New York Times* covered the life of this remarkable thinker, problem-solver, and healer as they commemorated remarkable contributors taken by COVID-19. As for The Center, we will remember her as a caring parent and dear friend who generously donated her time and talents to all. Dr. David Shadowen, her children, and many others will miss her.

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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.

After months of online learning for students and teachers this spring, the idea of creating a virtual version of SCATS seemed risky. Wouldn't everyone be burned out on learning through a computer screen? The Center, however, believed that our model for enrichment opportunities for gifted learners would work no matter the format: bring together young people who are passionate about learning with teachers who are passionate about teaching them, and with some imagination, dedication, and technical support, we could create a positive experience. And we did!

of Art, Vacation: Where Should I Go after the Pandemic?, and a Genius Hour class that focused on future careers.

Another essential component to SCATS was incorporating tools for online teaching. Classes met on Zoom, and teachers used Google Classroom to share materials and to receive and respond to students' work. Other resources included Google Earth, online museums, free filmmaking programs, and Microsoft Make-Code Arcade. Filmmaking Workshop teacher Abby Siemen of Shelbyville noted that the virtual format also meant her stu-



IZAYAH LARKINS

Green, who taught *A Toy's Story*, explained, "Breakout rooms helped the kids open up and talk. In a class I observed, they talked about donuts for a few minutes but then got back on topic. It cracked me up because this is exactly what they do in a regular classroom — they get a little off topic, and then they get back on."

SCATS Rises to the Challenge

From June 8-19, each Monday to Friday, 51 students attended two of the 12 courses offered, all taught by WKU graduate students as their practicum in gifted studies. Campers participated in their first class in the morning and, after a lunch break, their second class in the afternoon. Despite the absence of traditions, such as Optionals and the SCATS Olympics, the SCATS spirit was alive as campers not only immersed themselves in topics that fascinated them but also made friends.

The first step for a successful camp was for teachers to find topics that would engage students in a virtual environment. Amy Jeziorski of Louisville, who taught *Top Secret! The Art and Science of Secret Codes*, explained, "I looked for a topic that had online tools available. I did a lot of research to prepare, so it was an opportunity for me to learn along with them." Other classes included *The Mathematics*



IZAYAH LARKINS

dents could work on their projects outside of class: "They had films that took place on their farm or in their home."

Within the Zoom program, teachers utilized screen sharing, online chats, and breakout rooms, which allowed smaller groups of students to collaborate in their own virtual space to which the teacher could drop in. Annie Starnes of Bowling



IZAYAH LARKINS



SIENNA MILLER

One of the projects in I Survived was making our own reality show. My favorite part was creating descriptions for each of the scenes because I have a writer's passion in me. I loved creating the voice of the show.

— Halle Burton (SCATS 2020) of Russell Springs, KY

In Filmmaking, I liked editing. I worked with music to try to find what fit the mood. My film is a dystopian story, and the characters are running away to hold a revolution.

— Sienna Johnson (SCATS 2019-20) of Bighill, KY

Students in Create Your Own Retro Arcade Game, taught by Cailee Marcum of Sidney, used breakout rooms to give each other feedback on the video games they were creating. For instance, one day Jakob Norsworthy (Super Saturdays 2012-16; SCATS 2019-20) of Harned and Ayden Dichiaro (Super Saturdays 2015-16; SCATS 2020) of Lexington asked questions about a game made by Anthony Pike (SCATS 2018-20) of Hodgenville: “Does the health pack give you extra time? Do you instantly die if you get hit by a ghost?”

Cailee also used screen sharing; it allowed her to “take control of the student’s screen and walk them through their coding.” She was one of many teachers who invited guests to visit virtually. Student Sam Siler (SCATS 2020) of Burlington loved the opportunity to meet real coders: “A company called Bit Source joined our class one day. They worked as coal miners, but they got degrees in coding, and now they’re creating games and virtual reality programs.”

One of the most important challenges for SCATS was to create a sense of community. Amy Wallace of Bowling Green, who taught *The Circle of Creativity: Connecting Art, Music, & Storytelling*, saw her students develop trust in each other. At first, some students shared their work only with her, reluctant to let others see it. In week two, however, “when they shared their products, every single student showed some of their work to everyone else.”

Teacher involvement was key to that community feeling. First-time camper Sara Parkerson of Bowling Green said, “SCATS is a lot different from school because instead of teachers just giving you instructions to a worksheet, they talk to

instance, when we watched Disney’s *Hercules*, they said Pegasus shouldn’t be in that storyline, and then they wanted to know more about Pegasus. I found a reader’s theater play, so they could see who his actual owner was.”

Teachers also saw students being supportive of each other. Ruth Osborne of Whitley County, who taught *Human Anatomy: Your Body’s Lifelines*, said, “When we were doing the circulatory system model, one of the students needed extra time to get hers completed, and some students stayed on well after time was up to see her run the fluid through her model.”

As for connecting with peers, online friendships came easily for some campers. Luke Popplewell (Winter Super Saturdays 2016; SCATS 2020) of Russell County said, “I made a lot of new friends, especially during projects. I had two people who were in both my classes, and if we got to choose our partners, we always chose each other.”

The final test of the success of online SCATS was how stu-

dents responded at the end. Micaiah Mize (SCATS 2020) of Maryville, TN, summed up what many felt: “This was a really good experience. At first I was thinking I’d just get this camp on my resume so it would look good for college, but at the end I was like, ‘Wow, I’m really going to miss this after it’s over!’”

The next SCATS will take place June 6-18, 2021, back on campus.



you about what you’re learning.” Izayah Larkins (SCATS 2020) of Bowling Green added, “The teachers gave me new knowledge — for example, I didn’t know that colors can express emotions like music can.”

Teachers in turn appreciated the students’ enthusiasm. Bethany Heming of Bowling Green, who taught *Greek Life*, commented, “It was neat to see them take a discussion to a different level. For

Gifted students often go in unexpected directions, so it was no surprise that some of the campers at Online Camp Explore, which took place July 13-17, did something that no one expected: they turned lunchtime, which was supposed to be their break from being online, into a multi-state social gathering.

The 23 students began each morning as a group talking about what they had learned the previous day and listening to a story read by Julia Roberts, Executive Director of The Center. They then divided into small groups based on age and attended their first three classes. Then, rather than eat lunch in the real world, some of the students, who had finished first through third grade this spring, took the opportunity to stay logged in and make new friends. Unlike other years, when many campers lived within a few hours drive to Bowling Green, this year students hailed from eight counties in Kentucky and four other states—California, Idaho, New York, and Tennessee—meaning they could compare notes on everything from the current toy fads to what school had been like during the pandemic. After lunch, students attended their last two classes.

Courses this year were math, science, art, clowning, and language arts, and the theme was patterns. In science, teacher Lori Darnell focused on basic chemical patterns, and each day students conducted a hands-on experiment to learn about the different states of matter. Students used hydrogen peroxide, baking soda, and vinegar to inflate a balloon. To learn about chemical and physical changes, they used hydrogen peroxide, dish soap, water, and yeast to create foaming “elephant toothpaste.” The favorite experiment proved to be lava

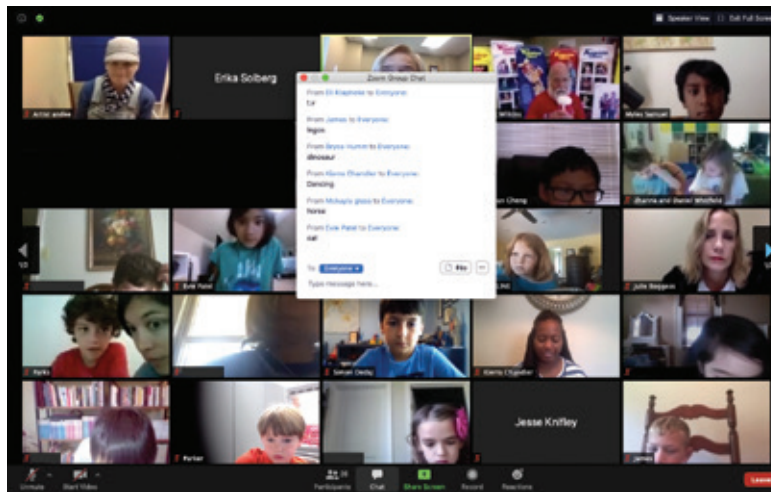
Online Camp Explore Makes New Patterns

Like all the teachers, Lori missed having the campers in the classroom with her, but she appreciated the extra help from family members at home who could assist with tasks like measuring. She also set up a Google classroom, so students could recreate and expand on the experiments.

Art teacher Andee Rudloff is also used to experimenting. One day, as students painted fish using a basic water color set, she pushed them to try combining the colors on their palette: “I encourage you to mix colors! You can use warm colors—red, orange, yellow—or cool colors—green and blue.” When first-time camper Leo Ahn of Hendersonville, TN, noticed that the amount of color he added affected the outcome, Andee replied, “I’m so glad that you tried that! It’s fun mixing colors because it’s like a mini-experiment, and you get to learn so much about colors and values!”

When students showed her their works in progress, Andee made suggestions such as “What will happen if you use red on the lips of your fish?” At the end of every session, she had campers hold up their work to create a virtual gallery.

Math teacher Kierra Chandler, meanwhile, employed virtual cookies one day to get her students thinking about the concept of estimation. After watching a video where a mysterious thief stole from a package of Oreos, the students looked at a photo of the remaining cookies to estimate how many had been taken. “What did you notice, and what did you wonder?” Kierra asked. In one class, Daniel Sherman of Greenville said 48 cookies were stolen; he knew because he had “counted the tics” in the plastic tray. However, classmate Eleanor Toy of Cold Springs had an alternate theory: “No way was it 48 cookies. Each of



lamps: “Vegetable oil and water are great tools to talk about mixtures and solutions because they mix together at first, but then they separate within seconds.” Lori’s students combined the oil and water in a plastic bottle along with food coloring and an Alka-Seltzer tablet to create their lava lamps. Once the reaction stopped, they could add another tablet to restart it, meaning the lamp could be used over and over again.



those tics doesn't show how many Oreos there were because Oreos aren't that thin. The number is way lower than 40."

"I love that all of you are listening to each other," Kierra told them. She next showed the class a picture of a full package of Oreos where they could count how many there were. "This helps me un-guess," said Daniel who had estimated 48.

Students were not the only ones learning at Camp Explore. Until this summer Clowning teacher Nick Wilkins had never taught class online. He said, "I've enjoyed the learning aspect for myself." For juggling, he explained, "We sent them a packet that had three juggling scarves in it. Trying to get them to correct a technique over the computer was a challenge, but it worked — I just had to be persistent and patient."

On the last day, campers dressed up. Nick said, "I asked them to find objects around their house that they could use to make a



clown suit. They had to be very creative. I liked that part of teaching virtually — it challenged us to say, 'How can we do this?'"

In language arts, teacher and camp organizer Julie Boggess chose books connected to patterns. One of the books she shared, *Calvin Can't Fly*, authored by Jennifer Berne and illustrated by Keith Bendis, allowed her to stress that patterns are not only about what can be seen. The book is about "a bookish starling who's been too busy reading to learn how to fly. And then the flock needs to migrate." The story allowed the class to discuss weather patterns and the pattern of migration.

Julie also related patterns to the pandemic: "I talked about how one of the hardest things has been having the patterns in our lives be broken. We crave normalcy, and we haven't had that for quite some time. The students talked about things they were used to doing every day, like getting up for school and packing their backpacks."

Online Camp Explore allowed The Center to keep in place the pattern of summer learning, even with some differences.

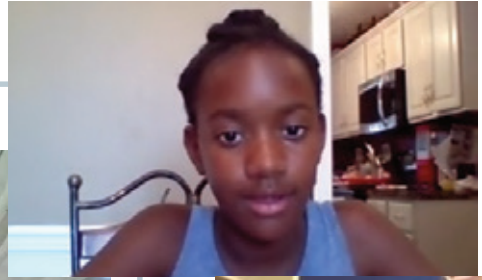
The next Camp Explore will be July 5-9, 2021.

If anyone was ready to adapt to a new learning situation this summer, it was the young scholars of Camp Innovate! From July 6-10, 51 third, fourth, and fifth graders attended The Center's Online Camp Innovate, with 30-minute classes taught each day over Zoom. The mornings started with a book read to the whole group by The Center's Program Developer Mary Evans, and then students were placed into small groups based on grade for three morning classes, a break for lunch, and two afternoon classes.

In Math, teacher Kierra Chandler gave students a problem of the day and project-based activities. For instance, they figured out how many donuts were in the biggest box of Krispy Kremes ever, first by estimating, next by working with a limited set of data, and then, after deducing what information they still needed, a complete set of facts. (The answer, by the way, was 2,400 doughnuts!) Later in the week students planned their own dinner parties. After setting a budget, the number of guests, and a menu, they worked on such concepts as adjusting recipes to feed more people and adjusting budgets based on the cost of ingredients.

Kierra commented, "It's cool to see the application to real life and how their thoughts change. It's higher-order thinking because they're having to constantly reassess." Menus varied, but Kierra had a favorite: "A student came in with calamari, seafood scampi — a full list. I said, 'Can I have an invitation to your party?'"

In Clowning, Nick Wilkins, Ringling Brothers-trained Broadway the Clown, was able to improve students' confidence and communication skills. The first day, many students wore the clown noses sent to them in their box of supplies while they learned about different types of clown face



Camp Innovate Finds New Ways to Learn

designs, listed clowns they knew, and investigated a photo of the world's largest pie fight. Later in the week they made balloon animals, juggled with scarves, discussed clown shoes, and watched videos of classic clowns.

The course also included a visit from Bowling Green magician Mr. Magic, who showed students how to do such illusions as the Haunted Paper Clip and the Super-glue Pencil. Nick reminded his students to not give up their magician secrets: "If someone asks you how you did the trick, say, 'Very carefully!'"

During class time in Science, teacher Kayla Sturgeon covered a variety of scientific concepts and helped students

prepare for experiments they would conduct after class. One evening, they did a nighttime star count to talk about light pollution, and on another they made microscopes with a smartphone using a water droplet as a lens — the photographs they took of different household items were shared online. Another experiment in-

involved constructing homemade thermoses. Kayla explained, "They used supplies from around their house. They also took the plastic top from a Coke bottle, filled it up with water and froze it, so they could monitor how much of the ice cube melted when it was put in the thermos." (During one class, a student admonished his mom not to move the bottle cap in the freezer because it was for his experiment.)

During class on the day after each experiment, students shared results as Kayla posed lots of *why* and *how* questions, such as "Why would you see more stars the longer you've been outside?" and "How does a thermos work?" She explained, "I like being able to come into the classroom

where all the kids are excited to learn and want to learn. They think outside the box. Some of their explanations on why they would be able to see a certain number of stars exceeded what I would expect from that grade.”

In Language Arts, teacher and camp organizer Julie Boggess read a range of books with her classes from *Not Your Typical Dragon*, written by Dan Bar-el and illustrated by Tim Bowers, and *The Girl Who Thought in Pictures: The Story of Temple Grandin*, by Julia Finley Mosca and illustrated by Daniel Riley. The books were designed not only to entertain but to get students thinking about big issues like accepting themselves as they are and the power of innovative thinking.

She helped the students be active readers by asking them to make predictions about what would happen and other questions about the text as they read, and by leading them in discussions. One highlight came when the book on Temple Grandin encouraged its audience to take advantage of opportunities even when the world sees them as different: When Julie read, “Walk through that door!” Edmondo

Cepeda of Franklin, TN, replied with hearty enthusiasm, “I shall!”

Andee Rudloff, a veteran Camp Innovate teacher, had concerns about teaching online: “I’m so hands-on in what I do in the creative world. How was I going to convey that enthusiasm and how I work?” Her concerns were unwarranted, however, because from the first day, she had her students learning concepts and creating art while she praised them with



Fiona Berry, mural in progress

her trademark energy through comments like, “You’re giving it some depth — I like that!” and “High five!”

One activity involved painting watercolor monochromatic landscapes using different color values to create atmosphere. Andee noted, “Too many

people underestimate basic water color sets, but when you use a lot less water, you can get some strong colors, almost like a wash.” First-time camper Fiona Berry from Seattle, WA, said her painting “kind of looks like Mt. Baker and kind of like another planet” while Bowling Green’s Zoe Collier (Super Saturdays 2018-2020; Camp Explore 2018; Camp Innovate 2020) commented, “I tried to make mine look like the Northern Lights.”

Later in the week they worked on optical illusions by tracing their hands and using line, color, and value to make them “pop off the page.” Andee loved how students “got innovative about using whatever they had at hand. I loved how resourceful everyone was.” Best of all was that although each class lasted for only 30 minutes, the students were happy to keep learning: “When we finished class, sometimes they weren’t finished with their projects, but the students didn’t look at it as homework. They said, ‘When camp’s over today, I’m going to finish that.’ That enthusiasm has been really exciting to see.”

The next Camp Innovate will take place July 12-16, 2021.



JESSEKNIFLEY

Alumni UPDATE

Erin Anderson (SCATS 2006; VAMPY 2007) graduated from Rice University in 2016 with a BS in bioengineering. She is now working on a PhD in bioengineering at the University of Pennsylvania, studying how individual brain connectivity and head-impact history influence concussion likelihood.

Amelia Gordon Barker (VAMPY 1990-92), a 1999 graduate from Furman University with bachelor degrees in Spanish and chemistry, has been a forensic drug chemist for 20 years for the Kentucky State Police. Nearing her upcoming civil service retirement, Amelia is working on a BA in sociology from Southern New Hampshire State University to prepare her for a career change: case manager for special needs families. She is a step-parent and adoptive parent of five, including two young boys with special needs.

Brandon Betz (SCATS 2002) received a BA in music education from Kent State University in 2012. He is a music teacher (and bus driver) at The Learning Community School in Asheville, NC, a small, outdoor education-focused private school. He considers himself lucky to have found a beautiful little school to teach music in a community of folks who fill his heart each day.

"I remember SCATS very well. It was the first time I spent an extended amount of time away from home, and I remember not wanting to leave. I loved the independence and choosing courses of study that interested me!"

Zach Brooks (SCATS 1988) graduated from the University of Louisville in 2008 with degrees in health and human performance and in sports administration. He is the executive director of development for the University of Louisville Athletic Association.

Daniel Flener (SCATS 2001) earned a BA from WKU in broadcast journalism with minors in film and creative writing and an MFA from Butler University in creative



Lauren Huddleston



Brandon Betz

writing. He is the college communications coordinator at Georgetown College where he edits the magazine, serves as primary news story writer, and oversees social media sites. Daniel and his wife, Geena, married in 2017 and have a toddler, Ezra.

"I distinctly remember taking a course in British Literature of the 1940s at SCATS. We read these amazing short stories and discussed them for the entire class period. As a young person not yet in high school, this was exhilarating. It made me think about literature in an entirely new way and really paved the road for me to go on to achieve a Master's in creative writing and to work primarily as a writer in higher education."

Scott Grant (VAMPY 1995-97) is assistant accounting manager at sgsc in Louisville, a global collective of teams, talent and expertise, collaborating to help brands own every moment when a consumer's interest can be converted into action. His work has taken him to both Asia and Africa. After earning a 2007 BS in accounting from Murray State, Scott successfully pursued an MBA in finance with an accounting emphasis from Murray State in 2009.

Lauren Huddleston (VAMPY 2004-05) studied at Vanderbilt University, earning a BS in English literature and secondary education in 2011 and an MEd in learning and instruction in 2012. She is currently working on an EdD in educational leadership and policy at Vanderbilt and expects to finish in 2021. She teaches English to middle schoolers at the Hutchinson School in Memphis.

"This spring I was awarded a Belz-Lipman Award for Holocaust Education. I've been teaching Holocaust literature to students for the past eight years; my interest in the Holocaust and stories surrounding that time was encouraged by the Holocaust class I took with Ron Skillern at VAMPY."

Paul Hudson (SCATS 2010; VAMPY 2011-13; Gatton 2013-15; Counselor 2015) graduated from the University of Alabama-Huntsville in 2018 with a degree in electrical, computer,



Anjali Malik

John Nieri (VAMPY 1992) received a BS in 2001 from Vanderbilt in electrical engineering, computer science, and math. He lives in Kobe, Japan, where he is the president at General Protocols, a company that focuses on programmable money.

Anjali Malik (VAMPY 1995-98) earned a BA in public health-natural studies from Johns Hopkins University and an MD from Tulane University School of Medicine, where she was inducted into Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Society. She is now a board-certified, fellowship-trained breast imaging radiologist and women's health advocate practicing at Washington Radiology in Washington, DC. Anjali is also on the faculty for the Departments of Radiology and Obstetrics and Gynecology for Virginia Commonwealth University-Inova Campus. Additionally, she serves on the Medical Advisory Committee of Bright Pink, a national nonprofit through which she educates young women and their providers on breast and ovarian cancer. She also educates and empowers through her social media platforms and is a frequent speaker on health literacy, advocacy, and utilization of social media in medicine.



Leandra Caywood and Paul Hudson

and optical engineering. He is a hardware/firmware engineer for Pulvinar Nuero in Durham, NC, where he is designing the electronics of a device that performs transcranial stimulation (the application of a small electrical current through the brain) that may be useful in treating certain mental illnesses.

Paul is engaged to fellow alum **Leandra Caywood** (VAMPY 2010-13) who is working on a PhD in chemical engineering at North Carolina State University.

"I'm so thankful for all the opportunities The Center gave me. They introduced me to my best friend, provided me an outlet

where I felt like I really belonged, and ultimately gave me some of the best summers I could've hoped for. I stay in touch with a few other alums, and they've been meaningful friends and connections over the past few years."

Another VAMPY marriage! **Emily Powell** (Super Saturdays 2006-08; SCATS 2009; VAMPY 2010-11; Counselor 2014-15; Head Counselor 2016-17) and **Andrew Thomas** (VAMPY 2008-11; Counselor 2014) started dating the summer of 2014 when they were both counselors. They were married this summer on August 8. Emily told us, "We had Bowling Green salt and pepper shakers on the table and used a WKU cake knife as reminders of how special VAMPY was to us!"



Lauren Snead Montefusco (VAMPY 1999-2001), with a 2010 BA from Middle Tennessee State University, is an information systems developer at Geeks and Nerds in Huntsville, AL. She was recently in the news for taking the initiative of using her workplace machines to 3D-print face shields for frontline COVID-19 workers. According to local news station WTSP, Lauren said, "My mother is a nurse. My favorite sister-in-law is also on the front lines.... It's for the good of the community. We all need to keep nurses and doctors safe, but there is that personal element for me as well. Knowing I could potentially keep my mom safe is huge."

Steffanie Skiles (SCATS 2007-08, VAMPY 2009), who teaches band and choir at McKell Middle School, was one of 24 Kentucky educators selected by the Kentucky Department of Education and Valvoline Inc. as recipients of the 2021 Valvoline™ Teacher Achievement Award. These teachers qualify to compete for the 2021 Kentucky Teacher of the Year Award. She also received the Greenup County Public Schools "Above and Beyond Award," the Kentucky Music Educators Association District 8 Middle School Teacher of the Year Award, and the Middle School Excellence in Teaching Award from Campbellsville University. Steffanie graduated from Morehead State University with a BA in music education in 2017.



Steffanie Skiles

"I love my time spent at The Center. I'm still friends with my campmates and counselors. Growing up, The Center was the one place I truly felt academically at home and surrounded by people just like me. It's a surreal experience. We grew up quite poor and without assistance, and yet my twin sister, Samantha (SCATS 2007-08, VAMPY 2009), and I were fortunate to be sponsored to attend SCATS and VAMPY. Then, by extension, we were able to get full rides to several different colleges. We both majored in what we love and are living it now. Because of these educational opportunities, we have bettered ourselves and improved our lives. I cannot thank Dr. Roberts and The Center enough for what they did for us and what they continue to do today for others."

Isaac Spradlin (VAMPY 1992-94) received a BA in humanities (20th century culture) from the University of Louisville and an MA from Syracuse University's Newhouse School of Communications. He is the communications manager at Commonwealth Theatre Center in Louisville.

"My experience at VAMPY was formative, intellectually and personally. I met friends who've been in my life ever since, and I realized the kind of person I wanted to be in the world. Self-discovery means finding a place, a culture, a tribe. And that discovery is so critical for young people. VAMPY gave me that and the encouragement to stay curious and engaged in the world. I'm still in touch with peers from VAMPY, and I always feel like I have the measure of someone who also went through the program, even if they weren't there when I was."

Jordan White (SCATS 2011) graduated this spring from Northern Kentucky University with a major in political science and a minor in pre-law. While a student, he took on many roles, including student pilot for Enrollment and Student Success; intern at the Kentucky Council of Churches in Lexington; mentor in the Latino Mentoring Program; and a senator in the Student Government Association. His awards include the William Lamb Leadership Award from NKU's Student Government Association; a Gold and White Gratitude Award: Outstanding Sophomore of the Year from NKU's Office of Student Engagement; and KY-Eta's Legacy Award 2020 from the NKU Chapter of Sigma Phi Epsilon Fraternity. He is currently looking into new opportunities and hopes to work for a governmental organization.

For more updates and Spotlight interviews of alums, visit wku.edu/gifted/alumni/ spotlight. To submit your own update, visit wku.edu/gifted/alumni.

Two Center alums were awarded the prestigious Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship for study abroad in the March 2020 application cycle, selected from nearly 7,000 applicants. Scottsville's **Emma Bell** (SCATS 2009-10; Winter Super Saturdays 2011; VAMPY 2011-13) is an agriculture major with an animal science concentration. Prior to COVID-19 disruptions, she planned to study in Ireland this summer. After graduating, she hopes to attend veterinary school to become a small ruminant veterinarian. Franklin's **Fallon Russell** (Winter Super Saturdays 2007-08; TA in Pop Culture 2018-19), with majors in English and teaching English as a second language, is pursuing a career teaching English abroad. Like Emma, Fallon's plan to study in the United Kingdom this summer has now been postponed until summer of 2021.



From Camper to Scholar

Alum Erin Elliott Returns to The Center for the 2020 National STEM Scholar Program

When Erin Elliott of Panama City Beach, FL, arrived on campus for the National STEM Scholar Program this summer, she was returning to her educational roots. Erin, who grew up in eastern Kentucky and graduated from WKU with a BS and MS in biology, was a camper at SCATS in 2002-03 and VAMPY in 2004-05. One of her first reactions to the STEM Scholar Program, in fact, was that “it was like VAMPY for adults!” At camp, she explained, “It was the first time that I got to be around people who were like me, who liked science. We could have an entire conversation about ecosystems or coral reefs, and nobody thought I was weird.” Now, as a STEM Scholar, “I was able to talk to people who have students similar to mine and who are dealing with a lot of the same things I am. I was able to interact with teachers and share ideas and not feel so alone in all of this craziness.”

The National STEM Scholar Program, hosted by The Center in partnership with The Gatton Academy and funded by the National Stem Cell Foundation, invited nine middle school science teachers to WKU from August 4-9 for professional learning, led by Rico Tyler and Kerrie McDaniels, designed to inspire their creativity and passion. Throughout the year, each Scholar will plan a Challenge Project with the financial and professional support of the program. Next spring, they will attend the National Science Teachers Association annual conference in Chicago. This year’s cohort of STEM Scholars, our fifth, consisted of nine teachers from eight states chosen from a group of approximately 200 applicants.

For Erin, besides peer support, highlights from the week included “working through several lessons as though we were students.” She especially liked Kerrie’s lesson plan to teach genetics using Ozobot robots. Another highlight was “getting to hear Dr. Paula Grisanti talk about research supported by the National

STEM Cell Foundation. All the work they’re doing is amazing — I had a fan girl moment.”

Erin, in her third year of teaching seventh-grade life science and agriculture at Surfside Middle School, came to teaching after working in zoos and aquariums around the country for seven

years. Her Challenge Project will be building a greenhouse and aquaponic system “for lots of different aspects of my curriculum — we can grow Mendel’s peas, if we want. My agriculture class will be able to use it to explore careers in agriculture and sustainable farming.” The feedback from the program helped her evolve the greenhouse from “a cool thing to use here and there” to a tool integrated throughout her curriculum. She noted, “I probably wouldn’t have seen all those possibilities had I not talked through it during the week.”

Adapting to online teaching was also a topic for the Scholars this year: “Formally, we went over some lessons

students could do at home with a paper helicopter. Informally, while we were having dinner or hanging out, we talked about things like what we could do with phone apps, and what to do if students don’t have phones.”

Overall, Erin enjoyed returning to where her science education began: “The coursework at SCATS and VAMPY was so different from what I got to do in school. It set me up for a career in science — I got to see what real scientists get to do. The camps led me to the path to college and showed me to not be afraid to explore things that I’m interested in. At the STEM Scholar program, it was funny — the first night, we had to share something about ourselves with the group that no one else could say, so I said, ‘I met Dr. Julia when I was 11.’”

Applications for the 2021 program will be due February 1. Please help us spread the word to middle school science teachers.



Summer Exploration Academy: A Partnership with JCPS

The thoughts of Felicia Moreschi, fifth-grade social studies teacher at Louisville's Medora Elementary School, mirrored many of her fellow cohort members'. She, along with 30 other Jefferson County Public School (JCPS) teachers, successfully completed coursework this past year to earn the gifted endorsement as part of a partnership among WKU, The Center for Gifted Studies, and JCPS. Central High School teacher Vanessa Hutchison's reflection is just one example of similar thinking: "Ultimately, this whole program has been an excellent opportunity to improve my craft as a teacher, and one that I am grateful for. It has better prepared me to teach students of all ability levels, regardless of how they are grouped within the school building, and will help me to be an advocate for those high-ability learners in my building."

Perhaps the most important class in the four-class gifted endorsement, the practicum provides a robust venue for

learning – for the gifted students as well as their teachers. SCATS (which originated in the 1980s to serve as the practicum for the endorsement) went virtual this year, and so did the Summer Exploration Academy (the practicum for the JCPS

teachers.). Students for these two-week camps (one in June, the other in July) were high-ability Louisvillians finishing third, fourth, or fifth grade. At no cost to the student, the Summer Exploration Academy offered 31 classes, each for 90 minutes a day. Practicum teachers not only created

and taught a class, but they also observed their fellow cohort members teach. Lynette Breedlove, Mary Evans, and Tracy Inman taught the endorsement classes and observed and mentored the students in action in the practicum. Parents were even engaged in learning during a parent seminar, suggested by one of the practicum teachers.

Take a glimpse inside Soaring through Amazing Amusement Parks taught by Rusty Wiehe, a second-grade teacher at Farmer Elementary. One part of his multidisciplinary class focused on science, where he asked such questions as "Do you know the physics of how a roller coaster works? Does it use potential energy or kinetic energy or both? What part do inertia and friction play?" Rusty's students can now answer these questions and many more.

Rusty knows a lot about roller coasters since he has ridden over 100 different roller coasters himself! For one assignment, he posted links to different amusement park websites from around the world, asking students to visit three of them. Students then completed a three-oval Venn diagram comparing and contrasting the amusement parks and shared their products in breakout rooms. Students explored different aspects of park design from landscaping to layout to ride development as they created their own amusement parks. One of his students Lyndsey Denton expressed her creativity in her final project by designing the Rainbow Loopy Loop roller coaster. Designed like a rainbow, her roller coaster had seven loops, one for each color of the rainbow. Another student, Dolly Harland, designed Panda Paradise that included an aerial carousel for the adventurous parkgoers and a Panda-Go-Round small carousel for little children.



Felicia Moreschi's class Extreme Survival Experts



Felicia Moreschi's class
Extreme Survival Experts

As Rusty reflected on his summer teaching experience and the other three gifted education courses he has taken in the past year, he stated, "Being a part of this cohort and teaching this class have given me so much insight into gifted and talented students. I am on the gifted and talented team at my school, and I cannot wait to use what I have learned to help our gifted and talented program at Farmer. I am so grateful to have the knowledge I obtained to help impact the students in a meaningful way."

Kimberly Jones, a math intervention teacher at Audubon Traditional Elementary, taught Honeybees! With the focus on the science behind honeybees, students learned about the structural adaptations of bees, why bees are vulnerable to particular parasites, and causes of colony collapse disorder. After researching flowers that most attract bees, Celestine Hewitt used the drawing feature in Google Docs to create a blueprint of a bee garden complete with a variety of carefully placed various

I am thankful that the courses I completed through this endorsement program have provided me with a wealth of research-proven knowledge and practices. The practicum gave me the opportunity to witness countless examples of gifted behaviors and thought processes, which were so valuable to my synthesis of all I have learned throughout the cohort. Now that I have completed the practicum experience, I am armed with the tools I need to make a difference for gifted students.

— Felicia Moreschi, Medora Elementary School



Lucia Smith, Hotel Honeycomb

flowers. Lucia Smith created Hotel Honeycomb complete with a vacancy sign.

Learning needs to make real-world connections, so a highlight of the class was a virtual visit from Keegan Congleton, a beekeeper, environmentalist, and founder of a local pollinator project. He shared his



Celestine Hewitt

beehive with the students, showed them different types of honey so they could note the differences, and engaged them in a discussion of the importance of bees in our world. The students were so enthralled that he returned for an additional day! Students then developed plans for saving the bee populations. One student actually bought plants that are good pollinators for her yard because she wanted to join the effort to support natural pollination growth. From ecology to tastes for the palette, students enjoyed the minds-on, hands-on learning Kimberly facilitated.

Kimberly also enjoyed her experience and looks forward to teaching this fall: "My cohort experiences and knowledge gained from it will positively impact all of my students. I am now informed by years of research causing my previous beliefs about gifted students to be forever changed for the better. My interactions with my students will also be positively impacted as I am now armed with tools and pedagogy to support my students in their pursuit of continuous learning."

A second contract among WKU, The Center, and JCPS provides the opportunity for 50 educators to earn their gifted endorsements in the 2020-21 school year. Additionally, Center staff will work with mental health specialists, Family Resource Youth Services Center directors, assistant principals, and central office personnel in understanding the whys and hows of talent development, especially among underrepresented populations in gifted education.

It was a day he had looked forward to for two years at The Gatton Academy.

Class of 2020 graduate William Dolan of Louisville put on his graduation gown and affixed his tassel to his mortarboard. He draped his silky-green Gatton graduation stole and his Gatton Community Scholar cords over his shoulders. After a look in the mirror, he was ready. He walked into his living room and took his place on the couch.

A graduation unlike any other took place on Saturday, August 8, for The Gatton Academy's Class of 2020. Graduates and their families had the choice to attend a socially-distanced, in-person ceremony at Diddle Arena or to join via a live web stream from the comfort of their own homes.

Class of 2020 members last left Florence Schneider Hall on March 6 for Spring Break—thinking they would be returning a week later—only to have the last two months of their final Gatton Academy semester and their traditional May Commencement festivities upended by the global pandemic.

The Gatton Academy postponed the May Commencement and planned an August ceremony to bring closure and to celebrate the graduates. The choice to attend in person or online was offered so participants could feel safe in their own choice. Among safety procedures for those attending the in-person ceremony were

A GATTON ACADEMY GRADUATION UNLIKE ANY OTHER



temperature checks at the door, widely-spaced seating throughout the arena, and required masks.

Most graduates opted to attend the in-person ceremony in Diddle Arena. Margot Hare (SCATS 2015-16) of Morehead said she was nervous as she and her family made the journey to Bowling Green. "I had doubts the week leading up. I really wondered if I was doing the right thing," Margot said. "My family has taken the

pandemic very seriously. I haven't eaten at any restaurant. I've been in one store since this all began. I was kind of wondering if we were about to break our streak of being safe."

Those nerves melted away when Margot arrived back on campus. "It felt pretty much like old times," she said. "Instead of just going to see my friends again and listen to some of my friends talk on stage, the only real distance I felt by being sepa-



rated by six feet was that it was hard to talk to people. If someone on stage said an inside joke, you couldn't poke the person beside you and laugh together."

Ngoc Nguyen, a Class of 2020 graduate from Bowling Green, decided to attend in person only after waking up on the day of Commencement itself. "I wasn't going to go because it felt dangerous to do it during COVID," Ngoc explained. "But, I guess I just woke up and had this feeling that I wanted to see my friends from Gatton." She was glad she attended: "It really made me feel good. I made so many great friends at Gatton."

The Gatton Academy's Class of 2020 included 87 graduates from 43 Kentucky counties who racked up a slew of achievements during their two years. Twenty members of the class were selected as National Merit finalists, nine graduates earned National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y) scholarships, and one was awarded the Department of Defense's SMART Scholarship. Most graduates (89%) participated in faculty-sponsored research at WKU during their time at The Gatton Academy, and 17 completed the school's STEM + Critical Languages curriculum in either Arabic, Chinese, or Russian. Most graduates (93%)



PHOTOS BY SAM OLDENBURG

studied abroad while at The Gatton Academy. The graduating class completed a total of 4,773 hours of service during their two years at The Gatton Academy, which is an average of 54.9 hours per graduate. This fall, the graduates are attending 32 different colleges and universities around the nation and world.

As is tradition, the graduates nominated two of their peers to speak during the ceremony. Governor Andy Beshear sent a video message to congratulate the graduates. And, Billy Joel's "Piano Man" ended the ceremony, an homage to a Gatton Academy tradition in which Joel's song is played at the end of each of the program's dances.

As for William Dolan, attending the Commencement virtually from his living room is a decision he is pleased he made. "One of the benefits of being home for the graduation was that I could be here with my family," William said by phone. "I could be here with my grandmother. We got together on the couch, hooked up the computer to a big screen, and watched. It was really sweet. I even moved my tassel at the same time as everyone else."



Talent and giftedness cross all demographics – including those learners who are people of color, from low-income backgrounds, English language learners, or twice-exceptional – populations traditionally underrepresented in gifted education. Black students appear in all subgroups affected by the Excellence Gap. Black students also are affected by what education researcher Gloria Ladson-Billings (2006) has called the “education debt” — the historical under-resourcing of African American education because of structural racism. The Center is one of



Khotso Libe, Zach Inman, & Fark Tari (VAMPY 2004)

Closing the Excellence Gap: Friends of The Center Share Their Stories

many organizations that seek to address these issues, most currently in our work with the Jefferson County Public Schools (see page 14). Beyond the work of scholars and researchers, it is also important to listen directly to the voices of Black gifted students, parents, and teachers: what have their experiences taught them about how to help high potential Black students who are being overlooked and/or unsupported? We asked five Friends of The Center to share their ideas.

Malcolm Jones (VAMPY 2014-17), a sophomore at WKU, studies neuroscience. He attended a private Christian school

that was predominantly white and had no Black teachers. He says, “I was ‘one of the few.’” He did have access to high-level learning opportunities, but he felt extra pressure to succeed because he is African American: “I pushed myself, starting to

take higher level classes which was our way of distinguishing gifted students. My mom has always told me being Black means you have to work twice as hard to get halfway there, so I’ve always felt like I’ve had to push myself harder and harder just to get to where I want to be in life.”

Based on his experiences and those of his sister, who attends public school, Malcolm believes providing Black gifted students “more opportunities to highlight their talents” and “to take classes with students who are on their academic level” is important. He also recognizes the value of programs like VAMPY for students who may feel limited at school: “I loved VAMPY. In addition to the academics, it was a place where you could be yourself. It helped me come to terms with accepting myself. I came out as a part of the LGBT community, and I didn’t feel like I could do that at school. I also became a lot more extroverted. My first year, I was really shy and didn’t want to talk to anybody for the first few days — then I felt like everybody knew who I was. VAMPY helped me become a lot more outgoing.” Overall, Malcolm believes opening up opportunities will help close the Excellence Gap.

Kierra Chandler, a second grade math teacher at Natcher Elementary in Warren County, has taught at Camp Explore, Camp Innovate, and Super Saturdays. She attended private, mostly white schools in Nashville and is “used to being ‘the only.’” It has been a thing my whole life. I was the only nonwhite student in my class of teachers to graduate. At Natcher, I am the only Black classroom teacher.” She also never had an African American teacher or

THE EXCELLENCE GAP

Achievement Gaps are differences in scores at the proficiency level among subgroups of students; Excellence Gaps are differences in scores at the advanced level. Subgroups include students who are people of color, from low-income backgrounds, English language learners, and twice-exceptional learners.

professor: “It’s one of those things that I didn’t realize how it affected me until I was an adult. I never had the chance to think another way.”

Kierra’s presence at the front of the classroom, therefore, already sets a different tone. She also feels that Natcher is doing a good job at identifying gifted students: “We have been prepared to look at all the students, not just at their test scores, but also at their ability. One time, I used a systems of equations problem to present addition and subtraction. I had planned the whole hour to teach it, but an African American student, Nelson, raised

ent setting. The focus of our building is to get low test scores up, and the state is not looking at how we serve the brightest students.”

Because of what she has learned in her gifted studies classes, Karen is herself better at identifying students who may have high potential that she could have missed before, especially because of negative behaviors. For example, “I’ve had students who once they showed me that they knew something, they were done with me. I used to take that as being defiant, but it can be a trait of a gifted child.” With this new knowledge Karen feels empowered:

about dinosaurs, and I wasn’t so worried about somebody walking into my room and saying, ‘Why is he sitting over there reading about dinosaurs?’ Some educators are afraid that if things don’t look alike for all students, somebody is not getting what they need. But the reality is that if they look different, maybe everybody’s getting what they need.” In Karen’s experience, educating teachers, administrators, and families about giftedness and the needs of gifted students is the first crucial step for shrinking the Excellence Gap.

Khotso Libe (Super Saturdays 1999-2000; SCATS 2000-01; VAMPY 2002-04; Travel) is a systems analyst in the Division of Strategic Enrollment Management and Student Success at the University of Louisville. He was able to get a lot of what he needed as a gifted student because his mother who provided him with high expectations and with enrichment opportunities (a common experience for gifted African Americans — see McKinney under Resources for More Information). The Center’s programs allowed him to excel, be challenged, gain new perspectives, and ultimately gain vital self-confidence and self-belief.

At the same time, like Malcolm, he felt pressure: “I took AP classes where I was the only Black student — I felt like I had to represent the culture.” He also felt he “was living a couple of different lives” because at his predominantly white high school, he was friends with both the few other Black males and the white Honors students.

Life changed when he went to University of Louisville, where he double majored in Pan African studies and psychology. Louisville was part of his “cultural development journey.” He explains: “For the first time, I was at a place with a significant number of Black folks whom I could have a community with.” He helped found the Student African-American Brotherhood which “promoted student success and the image of the professional



Wilson Young, Karson Green, & Andrew Que (SCATS 2019)

his hand within 45 seconds of my starting my lesson and gave the correct answer. Nelson might not score well on a standardized test, but you can look at what he’s doing in class and say he is gifted.” Kierra sees improved identification practices as crucial to addressing the Excellence Gap.

Karen Stone teaches kindergarten at Whitney Young Elementary in Jefferson County and participated in The Center’s gifted endorsement program. Her school is just starting to address the Excellence Gap issues: “We have students who could identify as gifted if they were in a differ-

“I am passionate about educating at-risk families about the rights for their children to be excellent.”

To shrink the Excellence Gap, Karen believes the school culture will need to change. Last year, she suggested a group of first graders reading at the third grade level attend a third grade reading group, but the teacher involved declined, saying “Taking them is just more for me to do.” She also can be frustrated by the way a focus on standards and test scores leads to less flexibility in the classroom: “What if I had a gifted child who is passionate

Black man. It was a great support system because that pressure was persistent, that you have to run all the way through the finish line.”

He says, “In college, we had a critical mass of Black students, so we could pull people together. We were all focused on one mission: succeeding. Getting a critical mass of gifted Black students together when they are younger, to build that community so that they can succeed together and support each other — that would be great.” Khotso’s experiences suggest to him that support — from multiple sources — for gifted Black students will help close the Excellence Gap.

Kimberly Green is the parent of three gifted children, **Kamrin** (SCATS 2014-16; VAMPY 2017), **Karson** (Summer Camp 2014; Camp Innovate 2015-16; SCATS 2017, 2019), and **Korrin** (Super Saturdays 2014; Summer Camp 2014; Camp Explore 2015-16; Camp Innovate 2017, 2019). She is also a communication disorders professor at WKU and a member of the Prichard Committee.

The Greens had no difficulties having their children identified as gifted as elementary students, and they have been mostly pleased with the opportunities afforded by their schools. However, they have had to be intentional about helping their children navigate predominantly white schools: “My husband and I grew up in Baltimore, so learning to parent in this space has been new to us. We have worked to understand the differences in how our children might experience education versus how we experienced it, because there aren’t as many children of color, and they’ve never had an African American teacher.” Working as a team with teachers and administrators has been essential, as has finding teachers who they feel can be advocates: “Part of our reality is that most teachers don’t expect to meet children like ours.”

She sees a willingness to change at an organizational level as essential to addressing the Excellence Gap: “We need

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Malcolm Jones (VAMPY 2017)

to recognize biases in individual teachers, but also on a systematic level of what school districts are doing.” Schools also need to work together, within and across districts: “Access is a big issue. We need to build resources and be more collaborative. What if they go to this school, but there’s gifted programming at that other school? What cross pollination can we do to help students to have access to resources at that other school without that school feeling threatened?” For Kimberly, organizational change and cooperation can begin to close the Excellence Gap.

Closing the Excellence Gap can feel like an impossible task because it grows

from so many distinctive problems, including structural racism, poverty, inadequate and inequitable funding for education, and all the obstacles gifted education itself faces. However, we can find encouragement in the growing awareness of the problem, the growing number of educators attempting to address it, and the fact that we have individuals like these Friends of The Center whose own experiences can help guide us.

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Friends

Corey Alderdice
(Counselor, Head Counselor)
Hot Springs, AR

Noah Ashley
Bowling Green, KY

Brown and Sue Badgett
Hanson, KY

J. Rogers Badgett Sr. Foundation
Madisonville, KY

Mark and Kathleen Bigler
Bowling Green, KY

James Graham Brown
Foundation
Louisville, KY

Pete and Kaye Buser
Bowling Green, KY

Tyler Clark
(Counselor; SCATS Instructor)
Bowling Green, KY
In Honor of Julia Roberts

Marjorie Farris
Richmond, KY

Ben and Angella Huddleston
(SCATS 1992; VAMPY 1993-94)
Foster
Greenbelt, MD

Donnie Gatten
Sturgis, KY
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Frank and Sharon Gieselmann
Utica, KY
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Ruthene Glass
Bowling Green, KY

Will Gump
(VAMPY 1985-88; Travel)
Louisville, KY

Jordon Hagan
(Super Saturdays 2001; Travel)
Tompkinsville, KY

Ione Hines
Hardinsburg, KY

Deanna Jenkins
(Super Saturdays 1997-99; Travel)
Bowling Green, KY

David and Laura Harper Lee
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Arlington, VA

Pete and Dixie Mahurin
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Scott Nass
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Pam Stokes
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Laura Turner
Carlisle, PA

Tanya Wilson-Ricker
Lexington, KY

Sharon Wu
Aurora, IL

I wish I could say that I am a long-time Hilltopper, but actually, I have two Master's degrees from EKU. My connection to WKU is via my daughter, Ashley Farris Trimble, who spent every summer from 8th through 11th grades at VAMPY. Dr. Julia Roberts and VAMPY were the most significant influences on Ashley's development as a gifted student, and it is because of Dr. Julia that Ashley is now an Associate Professor of Linguistics at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada. She and her husband, Mike Trimble, himself a researcher at the University of British Columbia, have two beautiful little girls, and they are very happy in their Canadian home.

For a number of years I was involved with a local literacy program in Madison County, Project Read, and I gave regularly to that academic effort. Unfortunately, Project Read has folded, and since I wanted to continue supporting all things academic, I have chosen to give a small sum each quarter to VAMPY. I have told anyone who will listen that VAMPY and Dr. Julia are treasures and that my daughter is proud to call herself a "cool Nerd." Thank you for the opportunity to share my Hilltopper story!

— Marjorie Fey Farris

Submitted to an Alumni Relations at WKU request: We want to hear your WKU story!

APSI Doesn't Miss a Beat Converting to Online

Early in the week during this year's Physics workshop at our Advanced Placement Summer Institute (APSI), consultant Joe Mancino worked an answer to a problem about oscillation while also encouraging his class: "One of the best things about being a newer teacher is that you remember how difficult it is to bend your mind in the pretzel knot you need to understand physics for the first time." This moment was typical of the combination of information and support provided to teachers at our APSIs, except for a few details: Joe was solving the problem on a shared whiteboard screen on Zoom; he was in Windsor, CT, while the teachers were in seven different states and two foreign countries; and, every so often, his dog would contribute a soft bark from the futon behind where Joe sat.

In backyards, basements, living rooms, school libraries, kitchens, and whatever location they could find some quiet and a good internet connection, 593 teachers from 42 states and 12 foreign countries gathered online this summer to learn from expert consultants about teaching Advanced Placement (AP) courses at the 37th annual (and first virtual) APSI hosted by The Center for Gifted Studies in coordination with the College Board. We held 30 workshops spread over three weeks — June 22 to 26, June 29 to July 2, and July 13-16. The third week corresponded with the dates of what was to

have been our first institute conducted in St Louis. Using Zoom, Google Classroom, and a multitude of other online resources, our consultants ended up not only providing the same quality of resources, explanation, and community as they would have in person but also master classes in how to adapt your teaching to meet unexpected circumstances.



Sometimes these adaptations were strategies the consultants had learned last spring when faced with teaching their own AP courses online. Joe, for instance, used the same online tone generator in his workshop that he had used for his students when he had to teach virtually. "Even in quarantine, my students could listen to a virtual sound lab," he explained.

Other consultants felt a little intimidated by making their workshop virtual. Art and Design consultant Laura Thompson, who is supremely at ease in front of a classroom, said, "I definitely had trepidations." However, during the actual workshop, Laura utilized the shared screen

function in Zoom to provide tips on how to plan the year and breakout rooms, so her students could critique each other's work in small groups. She also brought in guest speakers, but instead of inviting WKU art faculty as she had in the past, she provided colleagues like Jess Perry Martin, an AP reader who was last year's California Teacher of the Year.

Laura always works hard to build community during the APSI, and this year was no different: "I said, 'Let's find the joy in this situation.' We got to see each other in our own settings. We met each other's dogs and saw each other's studios. At night, we did Open Studio because that's when you could really chat. People got comfortable. A couple of them would have a glass of wine, and they

asked questions, and it felt like art class in college."

Like Joe, Environmental Science consultant Kristi Schertz faced the challenge of providing lab work online. Her teachers were sent some supplies and obtained other basic materials on their own, and Kristi adapted labs so they could be done at a kitchen counter instead of in a classroom. The home labs included using a soil testing kit, dissecting an owl pellet, and seed germination. She explained, "They used apples, baggies, and table salt. I figured out how they could do it with kitchen measuring cups and spoons instead of scientific equipment — although science

teachers are weird, and sometimes we do have graduated cylinders at home!”

Kristi, who lives in California, also had to adjust for the time zone differences among her students: “They started their day asynchronously with a video because we had students from the east to the west coast. A lot of west coast teachers watched the video the night before. Our first Zoom meeting was 7:00 a.m. my time. Then they did a lab using prerecorded instructions.” Geography also came into play when they discussed how to adjust lesson plans if they missed school days: some teachers had to anticipate snow storms or extreme cold, while others were more concerned with tornados, extreme heat, or forest fires.

Because she incorporated a lot of prerecorded video — not just for labs but also some PowerPoint presentations — teachers could make the most of the flexible schedule. Kristi noted, “A lot of participants had little kids at home and other responsibilities, or they were teaching summer school. They knew they could handle the two-and-a-half hours a day on Zoom, and the other material they could work in around their schedules. They also liked that the Google Classroom materials will be accessible to them all year, and they can watch them again when they get to

that point in the curriculum.”

One of the highlights of using distance learning class turned out to be Flip-grid videos. Kristi explained, “Instead of discussion on the last day of the Institute, they created a video. I asked them to share a resource that they use. A lot of them went outside and showed us something in their yard or farm or school related to our course. Teachers took us to their local creek and said, ‘This is where I plan to do



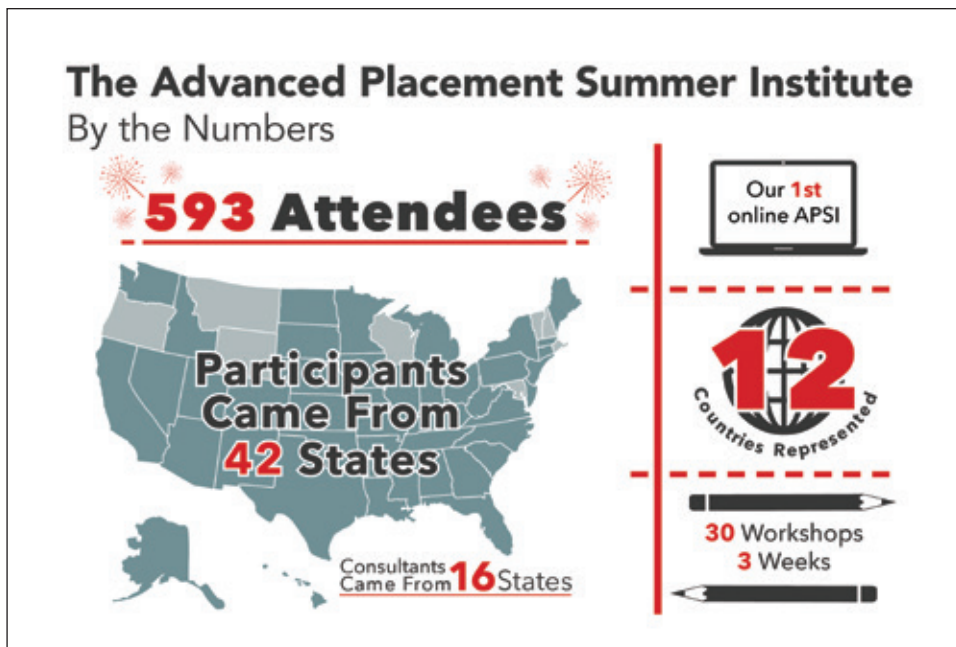
stream sampling’ or went to their school and said, ‘Here’s the pollinator garden.’ One teacher showed us a field with an invasive species. It was really fun because we got to see all parts of the country.”

Like Kristi, consultant Sandra Daye, who taught English Literature and Composition, appreciated having her students work asynchronously for part of the day. Her teachers’ locations included Alaska, Maine, Louisiana, and Colorado, and many of them would have found it difficult to attend the institute had it been face-to-face in Bowling Green. She had not taught online before, so she “didn’t know what to expect. But as with all APSIs, the teachers were excited and exciting.”

Connection with her teachers is extremely important to Sandra, and she knew teaching online meant losing the chance to have casual gatherings after class or at meals. However, she found ways to compensate: “Sometimes several of them stayed with me on Zoom, and we talked about all kinds of things. They also could text me any time, and we did a reflections sheet every day so I could find out what was working. They were wonderful about giving great ideas that we then incorporated.”

On the last day of class, it was clear Sandra had connected with her class. After everyone else had signed off, Emily Sherman of Greenville, KY, stayed on to tell Sandra that since her background was in communication instead of English, she was “terrified” when she had signed up but now felt confident. Auburn, IN, teacher Linda Barber told her, “As an older teacher, I wanted to thank you personally for being able to learn from somebody in my generation. Doing this APSI after all these years validates what I’ve already been teaching for many, many years.” The two of them then went on to discuss everything from retirement, Spain, and Key West — unlikely topics for the AP test, but still a typical APSI conversation.

The next APSIs will be June 21-25 in Bowling Green, KY, and July 19-23 in Saint Louis, MO.



Lobbying Congress 101

HOLLY LEWIS

When most people think of lobbyist, they think of \$1,000 suits, cigars, and private fundraisers, but, in reality, most “lobbyists” are everyday Americans – people passionate about a cause and who want to explain to their Member of Congress (Member) why that cause is important. While speaking with a Member or staff can be intimidating, it should not be. They want and need to hear from you. Here are some tips to make your meeting effective for you, your cause, and your Member:

1. Know when Congress is in Session – If you are planning a trip to Washington, DC, to meet with your Member, it is critically important that Congress is in session. Otherwise, your Member is likely going to be in his or her home state or district. You can find the House of Representatives calendar here: <https://www.majorityleader.gov/calendar>, and the Senate calendar here: https://www.senate.gov/legislative/2020_schedule.htm. Keep in mind, the first day and the last day of a session week are “fly” days; these are the days the Members are flying into DC or returning to their home states. They are not usually conducive for meetings. Plan to schedule your meetings for full legislative days. *TIP – Wednesdays are usually the best because they are almost always full days for both the House and the Senate.*

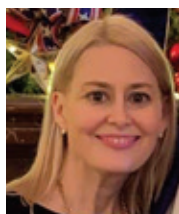
- 2. Know who your Member is** – Members receive countless requests for meetings each day. Therefore, they must prioritize; constituents are always the top priority. Therefore, you need to know who represents each person in your group.
- 3. Be Nice** – This is the most important thing you can do when interacting with a Member or staff. Treat the person with whom you are talking with the same kindness and courtesy with what you want to be treated. Don’t assume just because your Member is of a different party than you or he or she has taken a position in the past on your issues with which you disagree, that he or she does not want to hear what you have to say. At the end of the conversation, you may still agree to disagree, but you will have given the Member a different perspective to consider.
- 4. Ask for the right person** – Before you can have a meeting with your Member, you have to reach out to his or her

scheduler. How do you know who that person is? Call the Member’s Washington, DC and ask for the following:

- The name of the scheduler
- His or her e-mail address
- The name of the staff person who handles the issue you would like to discuss (This person is called a Legislative Assistant or Legislative Aide (LA))
- The LA’s e-mail address

5. Request a meeting – The scheduler is the person responsible for responding to meeting requests and invitations. It is not uncommon for him / her to receive 75–100 requests in a day. As a result, the majority of schedulers prefer to receive meeting requests via e-mail 4 – 6 weeks prior to your visit. Your e-mail should be succinct and include the following information:

- Date(s) and Time(s) you are available – Most Members will schedule meetings from 8:30am – 6:00pm daily. The more flexible you are, the better chance you have to meet with the Member.
- Name of your organization (if applicable)
- Name and home address, including zip code, for each person in your group – Keep in mind, meeting space is extremely limited in Congressional Offices, so it is best to limit your group to no more than 4 people if at all possible.



Holly Lewis, who traveled to England and France with The Center in the 1990s, is Director of Scheduling for United States Senator John Boozman of Arkansas.



- Specific topic(s)–These should not be categories such as “education.” They should be as specific as possible and should include bill numbers and titles if at all possible.
 - Contact person’s name, phone number, and e-mail.
6. **Be patient** – How quickly you will receive a response varies. Some offices schedule meetings as soon as the request is received; others wait until a certain number of days prior. (This can range from anywhere from four weeks to the Friday before the week of the meeting.) Hopefully, all offices will at least acknowledge receiving your request. If you have not heard from the scheduler after one week, follow up with him or her.
 7. **Be prepared** – You will likely have between 15 – 20 minutes with your Member. The better prepared you are, the more effective you will be during that time. First and foremost, know what your ask is – what do you want your Member do to for your organization? (Co-Sponsor a specific piece of legislation, block a specific piece of legislation, sign a letter, join a caucus, etc.) Reach out to the LA several days before the meeting to introduce yourself, tell him or her what issues you will be discussing, what your position is on the issue and what your ask is. During the meeting talk about your top priority and make your ask.
 8. **Don’t be late** – Make sure to be on time for your meeting, but not too early. As you will see space in a Congressional office is extremely limited and it is not uncommon for a meeting to be taking place in the lobby and often times even in the hallway. Therefore, it is important to time your arrival so that you enter the office approximately five (5) minutes before your meeting.
 9. **Be flexible** – Member’s schedules change constantly. Instead of meeting in the Member’s office, you may be asked to walk to a Committee Hearing or even to a room just off the House or Senate floor. This may make you late to your next meeting. If that is the case, be certain to reach out to the scheduler and let him or her know where you are and that you will be late. Your meeting with your Member might even be taken by a staff person. While it can be disappointing not to see your Member, this is actually a golden opportunity for you to spend more time talking about your organization as a staff member will have more time to talk with you than the Member. *TIP – Wear comfortable shoes because you never know exactly how far you will be walking.*
 10. **Stay in touch** – Use your visit as a starting point to stay in touch with your Member and his or her office. When you return home, send a thank you note via the scheduler to the Member thanking him or her for his or her time and inviting him or her to visit your organization. Send a similar note to the LA and be sure to invite him or her to visit also. Don’t stop there. Stay in touch with the LA and let him or her know about trends in your area, how pending legislation would affect your organization, etc. Don’t forget, if the Member does something that is helpful to your organization to tell the LA thank you. Also, connect with the Member’s local office by asking the LA if he or she can put you in touch with the Member’s Field Representative. Schedule a meeting with that person and invite him or her to your organization also.

The Mody Endowed Fund in Service Learning *(continued from cover)*

We were (and are) so thankful to our patients and their families for their faith in two new immigrant doctors! Because of our patients, friends, and mentors who looked after us and guided us and our community who supported us, we are what we are and where we are today. We keep this perspective in mind all the time. We have discussed this with our daughters many times, and we are thrilled that they are trying to follow in our footsteps.

This is why we continuously stay engaged with our community here and in our village and town in India.

Our nurses helped us day and night, and the time came for us to help them by

in return except inner joy and happiness of making a difference.

The Mody Endowed Fund in Service Learning has the potential to make a substantial difference in thousands of lives – including the givers'. This fund comprises three parts:

Mody Visiting Lecture Series in Service Learning and Volunteerism

A portion of the gift will be used for an honorarium and travel expenses to bring in a nationally renowned speaker in service learning and volunteerism in the summer and fall of each year. In the summer, the speaker will stay on campus

existing organizations and/or initiatives or they may propose new initiatives to respond to a community need. Each year, recipients of Mody Microgrants will report back on the impact they have made in their communities.

The Mody Community Service Competition in Kentucky

A statewide competition will be advertised and held for students in any Kentucky public school (K-12) who wish to develop an original service learning and volunteerism project to respond to a specific need in their community anywhere in Kentucky. Funding will be awarded to first (\$1,500), second (\$1,000), and third place (\$500) winners to provide seed money to implement their solution. Winners of the Mody Competition will report back on the impact they have made in their communities.

Their village in India and the south-central Kentucky region have long benefited from the Modys' servants' hearts, and their generous support provides a permanent source of funding to educate and equip future generations of volunteers. Their legacy of service will inspire others to look for opportunities to use their natural talents and abilities to respond to the needs of their own communities, and the programs offered through this initiative will prepare them to do so.

The Center is so very grateful for their friendship and appreciative of their continued support of gifted young people in Kentucky and beyond. Now is the time to make a difference as Bharat emphasizes: "Lack of time with our busy lives should not be an excuse as one day we will run out of time! Please use your passion, your energy, your knowledge, your skill, and your resources to make a difference. And take care to look after others around you by wearing a mask in this difficult time."

Service learning is about the passion we all have to make a difference – be it for people, environment or animals and birds. Our passion is our commitment for improving lives of others in our community here and in our village in India. That commitment keeps me and my wife going all the time to make a difference.

— Dr. Bharat Mody | Glasgow, KY

teaching them in classrooms and providing scholarships. We saw a need for a scholarship for minority students at WKU's Glasgow campus. We always kept looking for ways to do more – whether that meant helping Habitat for Humanity, performing surgery on Sundays, providing community medical care, or assisting with and donating to To the Brim Food Drive, Children's Day, BC (Barren County) Reads and Feeds, the Shanti Niketan Hospice home, or Norton's Children Hospital.

I guess this is what service learning is about, and that is what we will continue to do as long as we can. We also encourage others to make a difference as much as possible. Of course, we do not expect anything

for several days in order to interact and develop projects with VAMPY and/or SCATS campers and staff of The Center for Gifted Studies. In the fall, the speaker will return to campus for several days in order to interact and develop projects with students and staff of The Gatton Academy.

Mody Microgrants in Service Learning and Volunteerism

A competitive process for awarding ten microgrants of \$500 each will be advertised to participants in SCATS and VAMPY and students at The Gatton Academy who submit concepts for community projects related to service learning or volunteerism. These projects may support

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DR. JULIA ROBERTS
Executive Director

The Center for Gifted Studies
Western Kentucky University
1906 College Heights Blvd. #71031
Bowling Green, KY 42101-1031

PHONE: 270.745.6323
FAX: 270.745.6279
EMAIL: gifted@wku.edu

MRS. AMANDA COATES LICH
Senior Director of Development

Office of Philanthropy
Western Kentucky University
1906 College Heights Blvd. #11005
Bowling Green, KY 42101-1005

PHONE: 270.745.2340
EMAIL: amanda.lich@wku.edu

CONTACT US

-  wku.edu/gifted
-  gifted@wku.edu
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CALENDAR

**Berta Seminar with
 Dr. Tom Hebert (online)**
 October 16

Fall Super Saturdays (online)
 October 17, 24, and 31

Winter Super Saturdays (online)
 February 6, 13, and 20

IdeaFestival (online)
 February 17

SCATS
 June 6-18

VAMPY
 June 20 – July 10

Camp Explore
 July 5-9

Camp Innovate
 July 12-16

**Advanced Placement
 Summer Institute**
 June 21-25 (Bowling Green)
 July 19-23 (St. Louis)