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## Two local Gatton students earn federal scholarships

The News-Enterprise

May 15, 2020

Two local students out of a total nine at The Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science at Western Kentucky University have received nationally competitive National Security Language Initiative for Youth Scholarships for immersive, critical language study this summer and next academic year, according to a news release.

The winners include Cat Appelman of Elizabethtown High School and Jada Hunter-Hays of LaRue County High School.

According to a news release, the scholarships, sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, provide money for summer and academic year programs in which participants study critical languages.

The programs typically are carried out through immersive study abroad, with participants taking intensive language courses, living with a host family and visiting culturally significant sites of their host nation.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, all 2020 summer awards are being carried out through five-week Virtual Summer Intensives. Participants still will engage in online, daily language learning, cultural learning and intercultural understanding.

The Gatton Academy has three critical language tracks in Arabic, Mandarin Chinese and Russian called STEM + Critical Languages. These programs are carried out through collaborations with Western Kentucky's Department of Modern Languages and the Chinese Language Flagship Program at the university

Through these optional curricular tracks, students choose to pair progressively rigorous critical language study each semester alongside the classic STEM curriculum offered to all Gatton Academy students.

This marks the 10th consecutive year Gatton Academy students have received NSLI-Y Scholarships.

Appelman and Hunter-Hays will continue their study of Chinese this summer through their awards.

Appelman is a graduating student in The Gatton Academy's STEM + Chinese track taking Chinese classes in WKU's Department of Modern Languages. Appelman is the daughter of Pat and Karen Appelman.

"I was originally interested in learning Chinese because I'm from China," Appelman said in the release. "Now, I hope to become fluent and travel overseas to really experience my birth-culture."

Hunter-Hays is a first-year Gatton Academy student studying Chinese through the STEM + Chinese track. Hunter-Hays is the daughter of Rosalyn Hunter of Hodgenville.

"NSLI-Y will help further my language skills for my future majors in Chinese and computer engineering," Hunter-Hays said in the release.