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Local Gatton Academy seniors named National Merit semifinalists

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Twenty-one seniors from The Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science in Kentucky have been recognized as semifinalists in the 2019 National Merit Scholarship Competition, marking the most students recognized in one school year in the school's history.

Since The Gatton Academy's inception in 2007, 138 students have been named National Merit Semifinalists. Eighty-eight current Gatton Academy seniors took the PSAT, meaning 23.86 percent of students made the National Merit Semifinalist level.

Local 2018 National Merit Semifinalists from The Gatton Academy include Robert Segó of Glendale, Central Hardin High School; and Lily Vowels of Elizabethtown, John Hardin High School.

More than 1.6 million juniors entered the 2019 National Merit Scholarship Program by taking the 2017 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test, which served as the initial screen of program entrants. From this list comes the nationwide pool of semifinalists, representing less than one percent of U.S. high school seniors and includes the highest scoring entrants in each state. The number of semifinalists in a state is proportional to the state's percentage of the national total of graduating seniors.

Since students take the qualifying PSAT exam in October of their junior year of high school, much of their preparation stems from learning opportunities during their freshman and sophomore years of high school. The Gatton Academy builds on those experiences to provide students with a robust application and preparation for the SAT, a critical component in becoming a finalist.

From the approximately 16,000 semifinalists, about 15,000 are expected to advance to the finalist level. To become a finalist, a semifinalist and their school must submit a detailed scholarship application, which provides information about the semifinalist's academic record, participation in school and community activities, demonstrated leadership abilities, employment, and honors and awards received. A semifinalist must have an outstanding academic record throughout their high school career, be endorsed and recommended by a high school official, write an essay, and earn SAT scores that confirm the student's earlier performance on the qualifying test.

Finalists will be announced in February and all National Merit Scholarship winners for 2019 will be announced in four nationwide releases beginning in April and concluding in July.

For information about The Gatton Academy, go to www.wku.edu/academy or call 270-745-6565.

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