

# the challenge

NEWSLETTER OF THE CENTER FOR GIFTED STUDIES  
WINTER 1998



## The Vision for The Center

Becoming a nationally preeminent center is the vision of The Center for Gifted Studies. This vision includes 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.

## The Mission for The Center

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

## Thanks a Million!

A gift of one million dollars to The Center for Gifted Studies was announced at a press conference on May 27, 1998, prior to the Kentucky Awards Ceremony for the Duke Talent Identification Program. The anonymous donors have pledged the gift to create an endowment for The Center. The donor stated, "The Center provides opportunities for young people to elevate their thinking and to broaden their horizons."

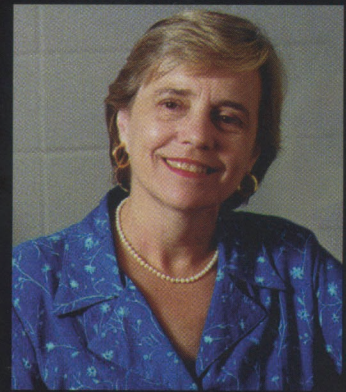
Julia Roberts said, "What an honor and an expression of confidence in the programs The Center has provided thus far and will offer and expand in the future! This marvelous gift helps secure a bright future for Western's Center for Gifted Studies."

# letter

Dear Friends of The Center,

Response to the first issue of *The Challenge* has been so positive which, of course, I have found to be gratifying. I was pleased that you read *The Challenge*, and I would be happy to receive your suggestions. The newsletter for The Center for Gifted Studies will be produced and sent out twice a year, so please let us hear from you.

The name for *The Challenge* represents two types of challenge - the challenge that children and young people who are gifted and talented "must have" to thrive and survive and the challenge to implement the vision of The Center. Bright minds require challenge to reach a bright future! At The Center we are working on providing challenge through Super Saturdays, SCATS, and VAMPY and by offering professional development to educators to prepare them to challenge bright minds. The second piece of the challenge is to secure support and resources which will allow The Center to become one of the five most comprehensive centers for gifted education in the nation. These are the challenges that we must meet!



Thanks to all of you who have supported The Center in numerous ways! I appreciate your positive comments made to others about the services and programs offered by The Center. I was thrilled when so many of you came to the 15th Celebration for VAMPY. I am delighted that many of you have made gifts to The Center through the Western Kentucky University Foundation. These tax-deductible gifts help us reach our vision. Thank you for your support! Support of all kinds is essential for building a strong future for The Center for Gifted Studies and the young people it serves.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Julia Roberts". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and elegant.

Julia Roberts  
Executive Director

## The Center Turns 10 Next Year

Almost ten years ago, Western Kentucky University's Board of Regents designated The Center for Gifted Studies as the umbrella organization for the various programs already begun by Dr. Julia Roberts. She continues to direct The Center for Gifted Studies which services the needs of gifted students, teachers of gifted students, and parents of gifted students. Plans are underway to celebrate our tenth anniversary - stay tuned!

Tracy Inman, Editor of *The Challenge*

# the gifted student

## Come explore the world!

For well over a decade, Drs. Julia and Dick Roberts have directed tours all over the world exploring cultures in both Europe and Asia. Feeling that global perspective is crucial, they will be directing two tours in 1999, one to Paris and the other to Italy. Both trips are intended for eighth grade and high school honor students as well as interested adults.

Spring Break in Paris, France is an opportunity for people to spend the week of April 2-11 learning about the history, culture, pageantry, and people of France. This program is designed to provide participants with a carefully structured experience in Paris and selected points of interest outside Paris such as Mont Saint Michel and Bayeux. The week will be filled with history, art, and culture. For a longer exploration of another culture, The Center offers The Italian Experience, June 3-16. Here participants will experience the grandeur of Ancient Rome and the wonders of the Italian Renaissance. Travelers will explore Venice, Florence, Pompeii, Orvieto, and Rome. It's an extraordinary opportunity.

Hundreds of travelers have accompanied the Roberts over the years including John Jenkinson of Midway, GA. As an eighth grader this past year, John traveled to London during Spring Break. Perhaps his favorite part was visiting historical sights: "I liked seeing all the different sights, especially Stonehenge—I thought of all the stories of how it was built, all the history. I really liked that." And the tour group certainly visited historical and cultural sights ranging from the Museum of London and Windsor Castle to the Tower of London and Canterbury. John would highly recommend the trips The Center offers to everyone: "It taught me a lot about the history and government of another country. For example, I learned a lot about Parliament. I found it very interesting."



Just as John's London trip was limited in number, so too are the Paris and Italy trips. Only twenty-five qualified participants will be accompanied by the program director. Please contact The Center to reserve your position.

### SCATS: "A Great Experience!"

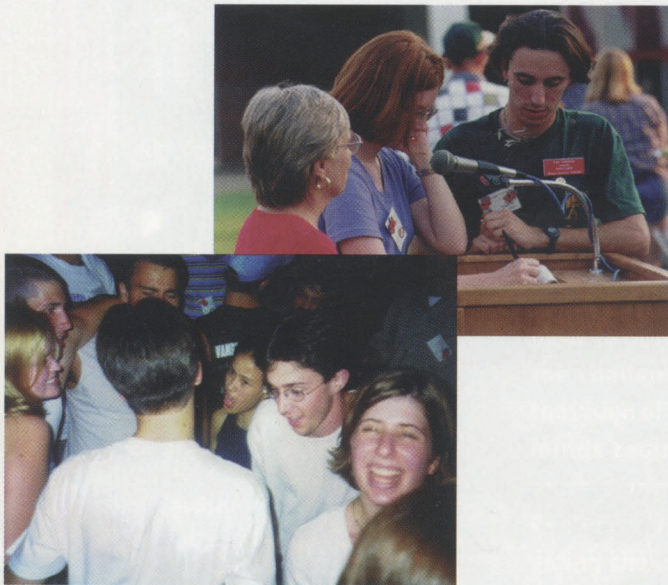
Those were the words eighth grader Casey Thomas from Russellville, KY, used to describe his experience at The Summer Camp for Academically Talented Middle School Students this past summer. This two-week camp is designed to provide challenge, stimulation, and opportunity to interact with other gifted and talented young people. Casey was one of the one hundred and eighty young people representing nine states who participated in the program. He particularly enjoyed the variety of classes he took, including Computer and Biology. Students in the camp enroll in four classes for a total of six hours each day. Casey commented, "Everybody given the opportunity should go.... You learn a lot, you meet a lot of people, and the teachers are real nice."

The teachers are certainly dedicated. For sixteen years, university professors and other experienced educators in-

## World Traveler

**"Sam continues to talk about her summers in Bowling Green.... The London trip she took with you and others was the springboard for her interest in participating in a year of foreign exchange studies in Denmark. She had an extremely nice family and went on some school trips while she was there (Budapest, Prague, and London.)"**

**Nancy Mullins, mother of Samantha Thomason,  
Greensboro, NC**



## A VAMPY Celebration

"I remember always looking back on my VAMPY experience fondly, but I hadn't been back on Western's campus since then. I got there thirty minutes early—and a flood of memories hit me. I couldn't even tell you who my sixth grade teacher was, but I remember every single thing that happened those four years at camp," so explains former-camper, now-lawyer Sam Carneal of Lexington, KY. He received word of VAMPY's fifteenth reunion the night before the VAMPY Celebration on July 25. Even with the short notice, he had "no hesitation." Sam first participated in VAMPY fourteen years ago and remembers it as "the happiest, most uncluttered time of my life." And even though he hadn't seen those people in over ten years, he warmly explained that there "were no awkward moments. We fell into the same pattern—it was a really, really good experience." In fact, his group has planned mini-reunions every two years. He even has dinner with a reacquainted friend from VAMPY once a week!

What is it about a place that makes people postpone plans and travel hundreds and hundreds of miles in order to visit once again? It's difficult to pinpoint, but hundreds of people turned out on a hot July afternoon to share laughter, memories, and lives. John Abbott, a recent alumni from Nashville, TN, joked, "I probably would've cut off a limb in order to go!" Many people echoed that same sentiment: Carrie Matherly, a high school senior from Michigan, remarked, "I kept thinking about how nice it would be to go.... The next thing I know I'm making plans." And it should be noted that this was Carrie's second trip to Kentucky in two weeks; she had just dropped off her brother at VAMPY!

How can anyone really explain what goes on in VAMPY? Yes, there are classes that meet six hours a day. Yes, there is a study hall. Yes, there are counselors and mandatory fun and talent night and dances and... the list goes on. But that list can't begin to

interested in teaching academically gifted youth have designed classes that challenge and entertain. An excellent example is Dr. Ed Counts. He taught Film Animation in SCATS' early years, took a break working on other projects, then rejoined the team. He missed the teaching too much. In fact, he felt that the most enjoyable aspect of teaching gifted and talented young people, whether it be Super Saturdays or SCATS (he's done both), was the fact "you don't have to patronize them. They're so bright; they're like college students—junior and senior college students." He also commented, "They're interested in projects and willing to take risks. The motivation is there—I don't have to beg them. Even those who don't have a lot of confidence in their artistic abilities are still uninhibited." His enthusiasm is evident both in the classroom and in conversation—as is his talent. Recently at the Louisville Film and Video Festival, his film earned a Cash Award. Only four of the one hundred and fifty films entered received this recognition. Perhaps he summed up his impressions best with this statement: "In my twenty year career at Western, this is certainly one of my highlights. When I look back at what I am proudest of and what I find most fulfilling, one certainly is my affiliation with Julia Roberts, Super Saturdays, and SCATS. I still get the films out and show them to any one interested. It is certainly one of my bright spots at WKU." With that dedication and emotional connection, there is little doubt as to why students leave the camp with a response such as Casey's.

SCATS will be held next summer at Western from June 20 –July 2, 1999. Please contact The Center for more information.

*"I can't believe that VAMPY has had such a great impact on my life. The first year my mom sent me kicking and screaming. I was sure that going to an academic camp had officially made me a nerd.... I didn't tell anyone where I was going! Now the word VAMPY brings terror to the eyes of my friends and family—they know how I can talk about it forever and ever. My sister has already said that she is not going ... yeah right ... just wait until she comes back after her first year!"*

*"But really, I have said all of the above to let you know that VAMPY is one of the greatest things that ever happened to me. All of us have trouble making friends in our own school because we are NERDS, but somehow we get together and make memories."*

*Anjali Malik, Union City, TN*

explain the energy, the intensity, or the fierce devotion of friendships formed there. For many, it is the people that makes it so potentially life changing. Joseph Yeager, a first time camper from Louisville, KY, relayed a comment one of his friends made about the experience: "The other forty-nine weeks of the year revolve around those three." That seems true for many. And Drew Curtis, president of an internet service provider in Frankfort, KY, reminisced of his experience over a decade ago: "There just weren't many places that kids like us got together to hang out. It really helped in the social aspect. For the first time I realized that I was not alone—that there were other people like me out there. It was energizing!" Sam Carneal echoed his comments: "VAMPY was a great place to be around people with one thing in common—we're all on the same mental level. We had a variety of different social backgrounds, different life experiences. Finally there was no hurdle of being too smart.... It never seemed odd to go and spend six hours in a class in the middle of summer." VAMPY was, and is, a place for growth.

Many alumni returning remarked upon the tremendous impact VAMPY had on their lives. The reunion, with its outdoor feast, speakers, and dance, was a glorious way to celebrate that fact. For example, Carrie Matherly reflected: "You know how you look back on the top tens in your life—this is right up there." These sentiments seem to hold true for others. Sam Carneal explained: "Hundreds of people have passed through my life – some of them my very best friends. I know that I will remember none of them as well as I remember the people at Western." The top ten, the most memorable—VAMPY indeed has touched the lives of thousands.

But the alumni certainly aren't elite; they want others like them to share the experience. Drew Curtis serves as example. He talked of a friendship he formed with a bright thirteen-year old over the Internet. In their conversation, the young man mentioned his missed chance to go to VAMPY. Drew, thinking back years ago to his experience, immediately told him what a terrible mistake that was and that he "better get in there next year!" With Drew's encouragement, he should be there. And hopefully, he too will experience the magic of VAMPY. As Sam Carneal defined it, "It's a bizarre, bizarre thing. It's a perfect mixture of atmosphere, program, and kids. It's just amazing!"

Amazing is an apt word. It is amazing that so many people—alumni, campers, teachers, counselors – celebrated the existence of the camp at the fifteenth year reunion. It certainly makes one wonder about the twentieth year celebration.

*"I would like to say how thrilled we are that Erin has had the opportunity to participate in VAMPY. After years of 'not fitting in' at school, she has really thrived in a challenging, 'everyone is like me' environment. Every year she becomes a little more confident in 'It's ok to be me.'"*

*"Besides the social aspects, VAMPY has also helped her at school here. She can research and write a paper with an ease most of her classmates don't have, and she is much less afraid of speaking before her class, as she's had so much practice at VAMPY in a small, supportive group."*

*Esther Cook, mother of Erin Cook, Louisville, KY*

## **Yes, I am gifted/talented but what does that mean?**

I make straight A's and don't always have to study? Is that why I'm gifted?

No, I just pay attention the first time because I like to learn new things. Am I gifted because when I see something I think about why it's that way? No, I'm curious. Am I talented because once I made 19 out of twenty free throws? No, I think I'm more talented because I have the discipline to shoot that shot so many times that it finally clicks. What I am trying to say is I'm not who I am because I'm gifted or talented. I am who I am because I care enough to use that gifted/talentedness. I don't like being labeled because that sounds like I don't have to try. I succeed because I try!

*Amanda Jarrard, Nashville, TN*

***"Don't always tell children they're wrong. Give them a creative way to make it right. That's not to say don't teach them the correct way (society's way) of doing things. Just allow them to think in different dimensions."***

***Meaghan O'Neal, former student of Laura Freese***

## Learning and Having Fun on Saturdays

That's exactly what over five hundred elementary school children do in January and February during Super Saturdays. These gifted and talented young people spend five afternoons with a small group of students exploring an area of interest with an instructor who has expertise in that field. Whether students are learning German or building a pin-hole camera that really takes pictures, they are involved in hands-on learning in which creative and critical thinking are encouraged.

Super Saturdays are designed to provide opportunities for high ability students to broaden their scope of interests and interact with other bright young people. And that's exactly what happens according to participants. Tim Evans, from Bowling Green, KY, participated in the program for six years. His favorite class involved a study of space that included making a working telescope: "I got to take it home! It was neat!" Tim was especially impressed with the instructors. He commented, "The teachers enjoyed what they were doing, and they knew what they were talking about." Now Tim will probably continue in the next phase of programs, SCATS.



This seminar series is a rare opportunity for these children. And their response and enthusiasm are great. Director Heather Kessler commented: "As former teacher and current director, it is very rewarding to see hundreds of children from across the state who are so excited about learning. With all

the activities children have to choose from on a Saturday, I am thrilled that Super Saturdays has become such a thriving program."

The 1999 program will begin the last Saturday in January and continue every Saturday in February. Please make plans now to join us. Whether interests are in computers, history, or writing, there is something for everybody. Contact The Center for more details.

## Recognizing the Best

For the past eighteen years, The Duke University Talent Identification Program has been conducting a talent search for gifted individuals. Bright seventh graders take either the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or the American College Testing Assessment (ACT). All students taking the tests are provided with information about their abilities and educational opportunities. Students scoring exceptionally well are invited to state recognition ceremonies. "The achievement tests that most students take are not sensitive enough to reveal exceptional academic talent," explained Ramon Griffin, TIP's Interim Executive Director at Duke University. "By having seventh graders take college entrance tests, we can reveal the remarkable talents that many youngsters possess. Only by recognizing these special needs can we then provide the kinds of programs that allow exceptionally talented students to grow." Western not only hosts the Kentucky Recognition Ceremony, but also provides services and programs for these individuals. The university even offers a one-course scholarship for the top five scholars.

In Kentucky, over 3,200 students were tested. Out of those, 842 qualified at the state level, while 103 qualified at the grand level. The grand level qualifying criteria prove even more stringent. That is why it is such an honor for us to play such a vital role for Kentucky's students. In the ceremony itself, state qualifiers receive certificates of recognition; grand level qualifiers also receive scholarly books in their specialty areas.

On May 29, 1998, Western hosted the Kentucky Recognition Ceremony for the sixteenth year in a row. Newly inaugurated President Gary A. Ransdall made the keynote address emphasizing the importance of making goals. Awards, certificates, and scholarships were presented to an enthusiastic group of gifted and talented young people. One scholarship recipient was Joseph Yeager of Louisville. He thoroughly enjoyed the ceremony especially noting the scholarly company present: "There were a whole bunch of kids there, and I could tell they were all smart. They were there!" Joseph used his scholarship to help him come to VAMPY this past summer.

Another bright honoree was Tim Evans of Bowling Green. He remarked, "It's very important to work hard and challenge myself. With all the adults present at the ceremony, I could tell they do take time to recognize and appreciate kids who work hard." In fact, the ceremony proved encouraging to him: "It shows me to keep working harder; you never know what may happen." For many, they come back to Western to take advantage of our summer programs. The key is recognizing the talent; in fact, next year's date is already set: May 28, 1999. As Ramon Griffin so aptly stated: "Talent unrecognized is talent wasted, and our nation can ill afford to let this happen."



# Caring People Changing Lives Through Scholarships

*The Center is indeed fortunate to have caring, generous people as friends. Through their gifts and donations, gifted and talented young people are able to be a part of programs who otherwise would not. Most give because they know what happens in our student programs — the life-enriching, even life-changing opportunities. Some of our friends go beyond a one-time donation; they have established scholarships that ensure gifted and talented youth will have challenge in a nurturing environment. Five such stories follow.*

## The Lynne Elizabeth Hamlett Memorial Scholarship Awards

This annual scholarship is specifically intended to help qualified McCracken County, KY, students requiring financial assistance attend Western Kentucky University's academic summer camps. Jackie, Bill, and Lauren Capp, formerly of McCracken County, in memory of a teenage relative who died in a tragic car accident, established the fund in 1997 through the Western Kentucky University Foundation Fund for Talent Development. While the family lived in McCracken County, they witnessed the benefits their own daughter derived from the efforts and programs promoted and/or provided by KAGE, MC-KAGE, and Western's Center for Gifted Studies. They also appreciated what a positive difference appropriate educational challenges, intellectual interaction, and social/emotional support make – both within and outside the classroom – and wished to continue supporting these organizations and the school community in some way after they moved. They established the scholarship by donating stock, which was matched by The Ingersoll Rand Company. Their generosity will ensure that young people from McCracken County will be able to attend the programs for decades to come.

## The Stephanie D. Woodward Scholarship

"Stephanie made a bigger impact on my life than anyone I've ever met.... Stephanie Woodward taught me to make the most of every situation, to believe in myself, and to form friendships that last forever." This passage comes from a writing by Cynthia Gilson, former VAMPY roommate of Stephanie Woodward. She writes: "At the end of the first summer, we promised to keep in touch. We did, and we were roommates for a second and third summer. As time passed, we both matured and our friendship grew. A few months before our fourth summer Stephanie sent me a card telling me she was looking forward to our fourth and final summer program. She ended with 'only 43 days more' until camp. About a month later, on May 31, 1984, Stephanie was killed in a car accident." People who loved Stephanie set up a scholarship in her memory. It is awarded to a VAMPY student who exemplifies high ethical and scholastic standards and has a need for financial assistance in order to participate. From this tragedy comes hope and opportunity for countless others. And this is quite appropriate for someone who "made the most of every moment."

## The Mahurin Scholarship

The Mahurin Scholarship will be awarded annually to two students from Grayson County Middle School or Grayson County High School to participate in SCATS or VAMPY. These scholarships are made possible through an endowment which has been established for this purpose.

## The Highland Scholarship

Friends who wish to remain anonymous donated this scholarship. It is designated to support a student from one of three parochial schools in Louisville, KY, to attend VAMPY. The request of the donor was that the scholarship would be made available to a student who "would never in a million years have the opportunity to experience VAMPY due to the financial condition of the family." The scholarship covers the entire amount. In 1999, the scholarship will be offered again.

## The M. Eddie Carter Scholarship

Through a pledge from M. Eddie Carter from Winchester, KY, two half-scholarships will be made available for qualified young people from Menifee County, KY, to participate in SCATS or VAMPY.

## These generous people

*have made and will continue to make an impact on countless gifted and talented young people. In seventeen years of programming for gifted young people, The Center for Gifted Studies has always provided scholarships, yet there are always more qualified students who need financial help than we can accommodate. If you would be willing to consider offering scholarship support or if you know a business or foundation that might provide scholarships, please contact Dr. Julia Roberts at The Center. Opportunities for providing scholarships can be funded on an annual basis for the cost of the program or an ongoing basis through an endowment. We would be delighted to assist you in this important endeavor.*

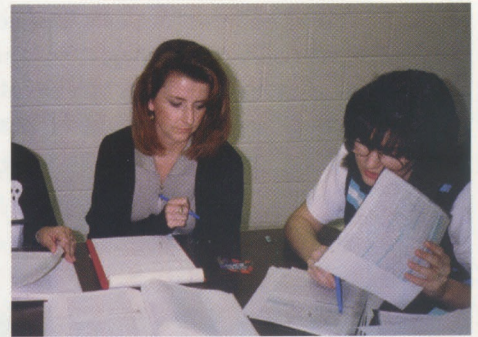
# the gifted student's teachers

## A Five-Hour Drive, One Way, to Class? You Must Be Joking!

**Mary Jane McDaniel, of Magoffin County, KY, wasn't joking!** Ms. McDaniel recently earned her Gifted and Talented Endorsement through Western Kentucky University which meant a five-hour drive each way from her home in eastern Kentucky. She commented, "I was pleased to discover that classes were being conducted on weekends during the school year, and the practicum would take place over the summer. This very reasonable and well-planned scheduling allowed me to get my certification." Perhaps motivation was the key.

For most teachers earning post-graduate degrees and endorsements, the classes themselves prove challenging when combined with teaching – so adding such a drive on top seems inconceivable, almost masochistic. But when students are concerned, when need is there, some teachers don't let a few hundred miles stand in their way. Ms. McDaniel is one such teacher. A life-long resident of Magoffin County, she earned both her Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Morehead State University. Even with those degrees plus ten years of teaching experience, she knew she needed more in order to meet the needs of some of her students: "Over the years I have often observed the many special talents of my students. I have wanted to further their special abilities but was usually unable to gather enough resources to do so.... I was eager to get involved in a program that I have personally seen the need for in my own district." Western had that program.

The Gifted and Talented Endorsement requires four three-hour courses that include a practicum wherein teachers actually teach gifted students. In fact, the endorsement provides the opportunity to work directly with groups of gifted children K-12. Western is the only Kentucky institution that has offered the complete sequence of graduate courses annually. A specialist in gifted education proves extremely valuable as a classroom teacher, a counselor, or an administrator. All have great impact on students.



Ms. McDaniel's endorsement has not only made her "more aware of how to identify the talents of students," but also "how to best develop their special abilities and skills." She is currently serving on the Gifted and Talented Screening Committee in her school district. So what comes next for the woman who could drive from Magoffin County to Warren County in her sleep? She explains, "It is my desire to use the knowledge I have gained through the Gifted and Talented Endorsement Program to help the gifted and talented students in my area receive an education suited to the individual's needs." And since it is the desire of such a dedicated person, that help is a certainty.

## The Center for Gifted Studies is on the Web!

By the time you receive *The Challenge*, we should be on the web (really this time!). We ask for your patience as we construct the site. The web site is <http://www.wku.edu/gifted/>. Let us know what you think. We're eager for input from you.

### Mathematics Vertical Team Institute: A Success!

This past summer at Western, the College Board Southern Region piloted the first Mathematics Vertical Team Institute ever. The one-week institute was designed for teams of teachers who wished to be trained to use the Math Vertical Guide and other auxiliary materials that provide stronger vertical articulation and communication

in mathematics curriculum and instruction grades 6-12. Participants in the institute focused on developing strategies, methods, and materials that will facilitate stronger student mastery of concepts such as rates of change, accumulations, and functions. The use of technology was integrated throughout the curriculum.

And how successful was it? Just ask some of the participants such as Patricia Martin and Barbara Tipler from Staunton, VA. They list the benefits as many: "Both Barbara and I felt that one of the most beneficial activities that we worked on that week was the chart with the five most important 'ins' and 'outs' for a course. This made us focus on what we truly were trying to accomplish in our class. While doing this assignment, we found that some of the concepts expected at the high school level had never been thoroughly taught at the middle school level." Ms. Martin continued, "Vertical teaming allows each discipline to outline a teaching strategy where all teachers are heading to the same goal. So often teachers get focused on their individual courses taught, rather than the overall outcome. Vertical teaming requires teachers to work together and communicate so that they may better prepare all students for college work." In fact, these two teachers from Stuart Hall, a private college preparatory boarding and day school, are so enthused that they have already led professional development at their school so that "the ideas and strategies of vertical teaming" could be incorporated into their colleagues' own curriculum.



#### WKU Awards AP Scholarships

**Western Kentucky University provides \$200.00 to each Advanced Placement Summer Institute Participant for them to award as a scholarship in their home high schools. This scholarship for an AP high school student to attend Western as a freshman can be in addition to any other scholarships or aid that student has received. Western is dedicated to provide opportunities for the gifted and talented population.**

Bettie Hester from Nashville, TN, also applauds the institute. She argues that it is an "easier curriculum to teach." She explains: "Children in lower grades work toward final objectives. The teachers introduce them to more advanced math topics without giving the mathematical jargon. Concepts are the focus of the teaching. For example, a teacher introduces area without talking about square roots in fifth grade. Each year there is progression of the topic. By pre-algebra, a functional approach can be taken. And by the time the student has reached AP, she already has a broad background of information. She is ready for AP." But Ms. Hester has found that vertical teaming calls for a change in what she teaches. In fact, she now feels it is "not necessary to teach everything in the book." Once the curriculum has been aligned with the new state framework, she feels it will be "very easy to follow." According to Ms. Hester, the institute was definitely a success.

The Institute will again be offered next summer July 12-16, 1999. Please contact The Center for more details.

#### The English Vertical Team Institute: Bridging the Gap

Teachers attending the English Vertical Team Institute this past summer here at Western were challenged to explore ways to bridge the gap in curriculum between middle school and high school. The Center, in collaboration with The College Board, hosted its third institute designed for teams of teachers who wish to be trained to use the English Vertical Team Guide and other auxiliary materials that provide stronger vertical articulation and communication in English curriculum and instruction grades 6-12. Participants focused on developing strategies, methods, and materials that would facilitate student mastery of tone, syntax, point of view, argumentation, poetry analysis, and performance-based assessment. Over forty professionals from six states participated.

Jane Cooksey, a veteran teacher for twenty-one years, was one of the participants. Having taught on the university level as well as the secondary level at Allen County High School in Scottsville, KY, she came to the institute actively seeking strategies and methods to align curriculum: "I think all schools should participate.... The institute aligns curriculum for all students, not just AP." She commented on the "nuts and bolts" approach: "It helped us say this is what we teach at this level and focus on certain skills." Enthusiastically Ms. Cooksey stated, "This was excellent!" She appreciated the excellent instruction of Effie Cannon, Sharon Chaney, and Danny Lawrence, all experienced Advanced Placement teachers who have demonstrated their ability to help other teachers prepare to use the Vertical English Team Guide. "We had three excellent instructors, knowledgeable yet practical. And those instructors, combined with the classroom teachers, allowed us to share lots and lots and lots of really good ideas!" she explained.

The next opportunity comes July 12-16, 1999 at Western. And according to Ms. Cooksey, "Western should really be proud to be

affiliated with this program!” The Center is certainly pleased with the program as well as the long-term relationship with The College Board. For more information, please contact us.

### The Building Success in Social Studies Institute

As part of an on-going effort to help schools make Advanced Placement courses available to more students, The Center, in collaboration with The College Board, offered the Building Success in Social Studies Institute this past summer and will offer it again this next summer. This institute is designed for teams of teachers who wish to be trained to use the Building Success Model and other auxiliary materials that provide stronger vertical articulation and communication in social studies curriculum and instruction grades 6-12. Participants of the institute focused on developing strategies, methods, and materials that will facilitate student mastery of drawing inferences, critical reading, point of view, argumentation, use of primary sources, and performance-based assessment. Participants were prepared to return to their schools and help other teachers learn to use these strategies, methods, and materials.

And that’s just what happened in the Elizabethtown Independent District in Kentucky. That district sent an entire team, vertically aligned grades 5-9, to the institute. BJ Henry, the sixth grade teacher component of the team, commented: “I enjoyed the experience; my colleagues did as well. We got great information, but emphasize to others—take a vertical team! You’ll get much more out of it.” She felt one of the greatest benefits was “to work together to align our curriculum—to figure out ways to break down the concepts from fifth to ninth grade. Now we can introduce a concept at fifth grade and build on it each year. We’ll be able to cover more and at a higher level!” She also emphasized how the institute made her “more aware of higher level questioning and having her students write essays at a higher level.”

Those higher level-questioning skills also impressed AP teacher Ronald Koontz from cross-town rival Hardin County Central. Because of the institute, he has integrated the philosophy of “Question Everything” in his classes. He wants his students to question why and how as they postulate consequences and possibilities. For example, in his discussion of the French and Indian War he incorporated higher level thinking in such questions as what would the French have had to do differently in order to win or what impact would the French’s winning have on today’s world. And his students seem to thrive on the challenge. He argues that the institute “gave others an idea of higher level concepts that need to get into the curriculum while also giving them

***“Talent unrecognized is talent wasted, and our nation can ill afford to let this happen.”***

***Ramon Griffin, Duke University***

***“Unfortunately, in many high school and college courses, teachers just lecture.... Too often teachers fly through material without stopping and pushing students to think. The paradox is that everybody expects students to think, but finding an environment which fosters thinking is difficult.”***

***“If I could do high school over again, I would like to make two changes. First, I would move to an environment that challenged me to think independently and then share my ideas with peers. Second, I would seek out more ways to experience new ideas and become culturally more aware.”***

***“Dreams are important because they fuel the desire to reach goals, and my high school experience did more to stifle my academic interest than encourage it.”***

***Joseph Sage, former grade school student of Laura Freese and graduate of the University of Chicago***

an idea of how to prepare more students to get into AP classes.” In fact, he hopes to send another team to the institute this summer July 7-9, 1999. And as for the rival school district, he added their sharing of ideas was one of the definite benefits!

### AP Teacher Training Turns Fifteen

The Center’s partnership with The College Board turned fifteen this past summer with the convening of the Advanced Placement Summer Institute here at Western. Two hundred and forty teachers participated, representing eighteen states and sixty-six school districts from Kentucky. Beginning workshops were designed to provide teachers preparing to teach an AP class with the information needed to get their classes off to a good start. These fourteen workshops covered the scope from math and sciences to the humanities. In addition to the beginning workshops, four advanced workshops in Biology, Calculus, English, and United States/World History were held in order to update and refine the skills of AP teachers who have completed a one-week workshop.

When challenged with teaching an AP course for the first time, most teachers feel a bit overwhelmed. The beginning workshops help alleviate some of this anxiety. Spanish (Language and Literature) did for Marilyn Mitchell of Bowling Green, KY: “With this being my first time teaching AP, there exists an idea of newness. It’s a brand new experience for the student and teacher—we don’t have expectations for the program. But only one there has to be ready for it. I feel a lot better prepared because of the workshop.” Ms. Mitchell also commented, “It was really wonderful to meet teachers from all over the country. I talked to native-born speakers about their experiences. It was a great mixture.” In fact, she really enjoyed “all the input from classmates.” With such an experience, Ms. Mitchell is ready to teach AP next semester at Warren East High School.

The next AP Summer Institute will be held June 27 – July 2, 1999. Contact The Center for more information.

# Spotlight on Laura Freese: "Listen to the Kids"

We are indeed fortunate to have Laura Freese as an integral part of The Center. Serving as our Staff Development Coordinator for the past six years, she has proven indispensable due to her dedication, enthusiasm, and expertise. Perhaps one of her most striking qualities is her realistic, practical approach in serving the needs of gifted students, teachers of the gifted, and parents of the gifted. For example, one of Laura's main responsibilities – and joys—is professional development. In her beginning teacher

workshops, she opens with the philosophy: "the most successful teachers don't suffer under the theories they've been taught." This demonstrates not only her keen sense of humor, but also her wisdom. She continues the workshop with real world strategies, real world techniques – and most importantly, real world gifted kids as examples. She explains, "I live in the real world. I know all the theory – I have to apply it. What I share is practical and useful. I really know what it's like. I've been there. I won't just come in and spit out a bunch of stuff. The value is taking the information and using it." And participants respond enthusiastically. She typically hears: "You really know these kids!" And she does.

Laura has had a rich background in gifted education. She has specializations in Gifted Education, Curriculum, Primary Education, and Staff Development. Compound those with her seventeen-year teaching experience plus her countless list of awards, affiliations, and accomplishments, and it is evident why she "really knows these kids." Whether she is consulting with schools for Gifted in St. Petersburg, Russia, serving on the Kentucky Council for Exceptional Children Board, or receiving the Kentucky Association for Gifted Education Distinguished Service Award, Laura focuses on meeting the needs of the gifted. And this is a personal pursuit.

Her former students know that once they have Laura as a teacher she "will follow them for the rest of their lives!" And this she does with love, concern and interest. Her motto has always been to "Listen to the kids;" she knows that if she wants to serve, they can give great insight. She feels she has gained more from them than any other source. These former students are now her "e-mail buddies," and she has been known to still give them homework assignments (that they squeeze in between court cases.) As she questions them as to what she did that worked, she hears about the importance of teaching thinking skills and teaching kids to challenge themselves. She always argued: "I don't know what you can do; you're the only one who decides top quality." She always believes in what they say: "If they say they want to discover a cure for cancer, I believe them. Why hold them back?" For example, she has little doubt about Abby's becoming the first female President. In grade school, Abby emphasized her future dreams; today she serves in Indiana University's Student Senate – and tomorrow, perhaps, she'll serve the nation. Laura's only request was a dinner at the White House. She believes she'll be there one day.

She cites Jason Crowe, a Super Saturdays student, as one example why she believes in kids. As highlighted in *The Challenge* this spring, Jason has been working diligently to erect a statue honoring Vedran Smailovic, a cellist from Sarajavo who has made a difference in his war-torn homeland. Since the last article's writing and with Laura's help and encouragement, Jason has made tremendous progress

***Her former students know that once they have Laura as a teacher she "will follow them for the rest of their lives!" And this she does with love, concern and interest.***

that includes support from Northern Ireland's Tommy Sands. This singer for peace personally sought out Jason so that he could help spread the word. Singer Joan Baez also called Jason to praise his drive and heartfelt endeavor – that call ended up in a friendship that included a concert visit (with Laura by his side) where she mentioned him and the project. And the story isn't over yet. Laura mentioned this story to prove that it is vital to believe in kids. Believe them when they say they'll do something. Others will believe as well. For example, Jason recently gave an acceptance speech when he received a Prudential Award. Afterward, one of the CEO's commented: "When you run for President, I'll vote for you." Laura insists that it is crucial we not only believe in gifted kids, but that we support them in every way possible. And she cites Jason as one example; there are so many. Who knows what may happen when we remove the ceiling!

Laura gives The Center credit for being an avenue for people like Jason: "It's so important to have a place like this. It gives kids a place to come where it's safe to be yourself. It's okay. It's okay to study math six hours a day. Nobody's going to down you." She also credits The Center with being a leader in gifted

education. One component of her duties includes designing and working with the national Field-Initiated Research Grant "Restructuring Primary Gifted Education: A Response to Educational Reform." She enjoys working with gifted students in this research capacity.

She also enjoys working with the parents of gifted kids. Here, too, she says to believe them – they're always right about their children. Their children usually are gifted. They've been fighting the system for so long as it recommends their children for Behavior Disorder categorization or looks over their child when she is profoundly gifted that they're frustrated. She "worries about kids who don't have parents to be their champions, the someone on their side." She encourages parents not to give up, to be the pacesetter for the community, to be informed. One aspect of her job she loves is establishing new parent groups through KAGE. She tells them, "The whole future of the gifted in your community relies on you and your attitude. Don't give up." And they won't, with Laura on their side.

In every sense of the word, Laura is an advocate for the gifted – and we're lucky to have her here at The Center.



# the gifted student's parents

## Question for Parents: Is Your Child Working Hard on Challenging Tasks?

**If your child makes 100s or A's most or all of the time, is that good? It is possible that this is not good news! Does your child attain good scores as the result of working hard on challenging tasks or does he/she complete the task with little effort and then receive the top grade possible?**

Working hard on meaningful tasks is important to each child. Hard work linked with challenging tasks creates children who have the work habits and positive attitudes which allow them to be successful at challenging tasks, who have positive self-esteem, and who continue to learn both inside and outside of school.

Good habits for accepting challenge come from learning new things every day. Children who learn at a faster pace and at a more complex level need to make continuous progress just as every child should make continuous progress. Children who do not learn to work hard at challenging tasks may never learn to do so. If a student does not have challenge, he/she may establish a pattern of avoiding any task that he/she cannot accomplish with ease. The message learned may be that school takes little or no effort. When the time comes when hard work and persistence are required to succeed (a special project, an advanced class, or a different level of expectations such as high school or college), children may not have the habits and skills needed to meet the challenge. They will be at a disadvantage.

### Parents' Input Wanted

The Center is dedicated to serving the needs of gifted students, teachers of gifted students, and parents of gifted students. While we have numerous programs established for both students and teachers, we have found that parental needs can be very



individual. We have vast resources available for parents; we host workshops year round; however, we need to hear from parents themselves in order to meet their needs. We would appreciate feedback from parents on program options. We also want to know how we can better serve. Please contact us.

### Upcoming Parent Workshops

Staff Development Coordinator Laura Freese will be presenting several workshops geared to parents during Super Saturdays this winter. All seminars will take place in Tate Page Auditorium from 2:15-3:30 while the gifted elementary children are in their classes. Dates and topics include the following:

**January 30, 1999**

Recognizing and Nurturing Advanced Ability in Children

**February 6, 1999**

The Emotional Side of Giftedness

**February 13, 1999**

Gifted Education in Kentucky: Matching Services to Needs

**February 20, 1999**

Strategies for Parenting Gifted Kids

*Please contact The Center if you have any questions.*

## Is Your Child a Perfectionist?

**A high percentage of gifted and talented children are perfectionists.**

**To give a project one's all or to do one's best in endeavors is a valuable trait – but many gifted and talented people take this to extremes, even to an almost debilitating point. Help and insight are available through Dr. Miriam Adderholdt-Elliott's book Perfectionism: What's Bad About Being Too Good?. This book is available through Free Spirit Publishing or interested people may check it out through The Center.**

# Congratulations Dr. Julia Roberts – Distinguished Professor!



It comes as no surprise to all the students, teachers, and parents who know "Dr. Julia" that she should be named Distinguished Professor at Western Kentucky University. After all, she is the one who envisioned, initiated, and developed The Center for Gifted Studies – almost single-handedly. She explains, "I am passionately interested in quality educational opportunities for all children, and *all* includes children who learn at a faster pace and at a more complex level." She has devoted most of her professional career to ensure that happens.

She, along with Dr. Richard Salisbury in the History Department, earned this very prestigious honor. Lois Hall with the Office of the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs explained, "The University Distinguished Professorship program is designed to recognize faculty members who have served the university over a long period of time and have compiled an outstanding record of achievement in teaching, research, and service." And that she has.

Her affiliation with Western began twenty-four years ago when she came to Bowling Green to serve as the assistant director with the Teachers Corps Project; one focus of this project was doing pioneer work in dealing with exceptional students in the classroom. In 1981, Dr. J.T. Sandefur, Dean of the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, called together public school educators, deans of the colleges within the University, parents, and faculty to discuss ways the University could support children and youth who are gifted and talented. At this time, Dr. Julia was encouraged by Dr. Sandefur to create a place for herself within the University, a place that the University would consider to be valuable.

First, she initiated a sequence of graduate courses for teachers that would lead to the endorsement in gifted education (an additional teacher certification.) Since the endorsement required a practicum, the Western Kentucky University Summer Camp for Academically Talented Students (SCATS) was planned and implemented. By 1983, she had developed VAMPY, the Summer Program for Verbally and Mathematically Precocious Youth, at the request of the Duke Talent Identification Program and the Kentucky State Department. In 1989, the Western Kentucky Board of Regents designated The Center for Gifted Studies as the umbrella for the various programs she had started and continues to direct to this day.

***...there is no doubt that The Center's success comes from her directing it – not her educational background, not even her philosophy. Just her.***

She has also established and maintained a fifteen-year relationship with the College Board. In addition to the Advanced Placement Institutes, the College Board Southern Regional Office piloted the English Vertical Team Institute, the Success in Social Studies Institute, and the Mathematics Vertical Team Institute. And it should be noted that all of these programs have met with much critical acclaim; for example, participants in all the summer opportunities for young people and educators come from across the nation with a few even coming from other countries!

With such an emphasis on providing quality educational opportunities for the gifted and teachers of the gifted, she recognizes how crucial funding is. Since 1990, she has written grants and The Center has received over one million dollars in federal support for research and program development. In fact, she is one of fewer than ten individuals to have two three-year grants funded by the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Act. A third federal grant focuses on high-end learning in Kentucky's Primary Program. But grant funding has focused entirely on specific partnerships with schools designed to achieve specific goals. Therefore, The Center has operated its programming on a self-supporting basis through fees for various programs for youth, children, educators, and parents. This budget pays for salaries and supports on-campus services. The need is great. That is why Dr. Julia is so pleased with the million-dollar donation. That will ensure The Center's continuance even after she is no longer a part.

As a Distinguished Professor, she will receive an annual \$2,000 stipend plus an extra \$1000 a year for travel and other professional expenses. She will hold this title for five years. There will only be ten Distinguished Professors at any one time.

Her list of activities and accomplishments could continue on and on, such as her being a board member for the National Association for Gifted Children, the Kentucky Association for Gifted Education, and The Association for the Gifted; her implementing

Super Saturdays; or even her numerous trips abroad over the last thirteen years trying to provide international experiences for students and adults. But the most impressive thing about her is not her programs, her awards, or her research. It's simply she, Dr. Julia. She has an incredible gift for making people feel important, even special. And it is genuine. From her "tell me what you know" to her knowing everyone's name whether it be a recent introduction or a VAMPY alumni from fifteen years ago, there is no doubt that The Center's success comes from her directing it – not her educational background, not even her philosophy. Just her.

People who know Dr. Julia readily agree. One such person is the secretary for The Center of Gifted Studies, Linda Bandy. She explains: "Working with the thousands of young people she has dealt with over the years results in much joy, but she has also dealt with youth who are very troubled. She has counseled these youth with problems relating to drug abuse, broken families, suicide attempts, and those with a sense of hopelessness. Dr. Roberts always takes time to meet with these youth in the dorm room, for a walk on campus, or shares her home with them. In her quiet way, she earns their respect and trust. Many of them return years later to thank her for having faith in them and for encouraging them."

Heather Kessler, another example, has a strong history with her. She began as a camp counselor for the summer programs and ended up as Director of Super Saturdays. She had this to say: "I have worked with Julia for many years and in many situations. Although her accomplishments are impressive, her character is even more so. No matter how busy she may be, Julia always has time for a kind word and a smile. I have never heard her complain or have a harsh word to say regardless of the situation. She is a truly outstanding role model for our young people." And if the full truth be told, she is an outstanding role model for us all.

## England Bound

Leslie Kendrick, a Rhodes Scholar, is studying at Oxford University for two years. The night before she left her home in Point View, Kentucky, she visited via the telephone with Julia Roberts.

- Q. Leslie, was your first trip to Great Britain the study tour you and your father took in 1992?
- A. Yes, the trip sponsored by The Center for Gifted Studies was my first. When we visited Oxford, I wondered then if I could ever go to school there.
- Q. What are you most looking forward to during your time at Oxford?
- A. Enjoying studying! I am excited about earning my Master's degree in the two years I'll be there. I'm also working toward the Master's degree in Renaissance literature. In addition to studying, I look forward to gaining a cosmopolitan view.
- Q. What experiences prepared you for the Rhodes Scholar interviews?
- A. The interviews were similar to others I've had such as the one for the Morehead Scholarship at the University of North Carolina (which she received.) Basically they want to find out about me. The panel interview demanded both initiative and confidence.
- Q. As you begin your journey toward a Ph.D. in English, what factors influenced you most?
- A. Most influential was the strong network of people I had encouraging me and challenging me. My family, joined with strong teachers, encouraged me to work hard. Working hard is key to success. And the TIP Program proved a pivotal experience for me. My gifted teacher got me involved in TIP – the academic coach encouraged me as well. Really it's a culmination of experiences.
- Q. You're preparing to leave the country tomorrow to study abroad. Leaving home to study isn't a new endeavor for you though, is it?
- A. No, I actually went away to school for my high school experience. I wouldn't have chosen to leave home so soon if other challenging opportunities were available. I really want to see challenging opportunities for young people in all communities. But I must say that exposure builds confidence.

Providing challenging opportunities is what The Center is all about. Leslie took advantage of that; it is part of her "culminating experiences." Leslie's sister Liza has also taken advantage of our programs; she attended VAMPY all four years. Leslie, through her hard work and her actively seeking challenge, has accomplished much in her academic career. And that academic career is just beginning.

## NAGC Comes to Kentucky

Attendance records were broken as over 3000 educators, administrators, and parents converged in Louisville at the National Association for Gifted Children's 45<sup>th</sup> annual convention. According to Executive Director Peter D. Rosenstein, the five-day convention in November was a time "to learn new and innovative approaches to meeting the needs of gifted children in all settings ... a time to learn from education professionals and experienced parents." He commented, "We are at the beginning of a new era that recognizes the value of educating our gifted and talented students. We realize that by properly adapting curricula and techniques developed for these students, we can achieve what education should be doing for all students – challenging and educating all of them to reach their full potential, whatever that may be." And the convention provided rich opportunity for just that.

Western Kentucky University and The Center for Gifted Studies played a strong role in the convention. The WKU College of Education and Behavioral Sciences hosted a reception for the NAGC Board of Directors and State Directors. Director Dr. Julia Roberts along with KAGE's Executive Director Sheila Cruse served as co-coordinators for local arrangements for the entire convention. In addition to this, Dr. Roberts also was the keynote speaker for Parent Day as she discussed "Developing Talents and Advocating for Talent Development." And as a member of the Board of NAGC her roles were many from facilitator to speaker. Moreover, WKU President Dr. Gary A. Ransdell joined other notables such as the Kentucky Commissioner of Education Wilmer S. Cody and Jim Wiseman of Toyota in a panel discussion. A booth highlighting The Center was displayed so that more information concerning our student and professional opportunities could be disseminated. Even students (some of them having participated in our programs) presented a Panel for Children Who Make a Difference in lieu of a speaker. Here the gifted and talented young people themselves spoke out about important issues. Learning opportunities were abundant indeed.

A special highlight for The Center for Gifted Studies and the convention itself was the honoring of Dr. Julia Roberts as NAGC's Educator of the Year. She is definitely a national spokesperson and advocate for gifted and talented young people. The convention was certainly a success and a rich time of sharing, learning, and supporting.

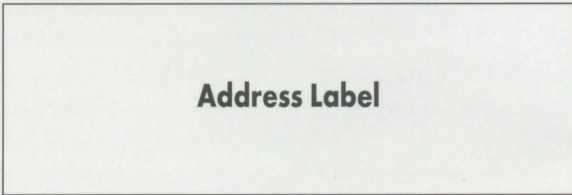


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Distinguished Professor!



## The Calendar of Events

Jan. 30, Feb. 6, 13, 20, 27, 1999	Super Saturdays, WKU
April 2-11, 1999	Spring Break in Paris
June 3-16, 1999	The Italian Experience
June 20 - July 2, 1999	The Summer Camp for Academically Talented Middle School Students (SCATS), WKU
June 27 - July 2, 1999	The Advanced Placement Institute, WKU
July 5-24, 1999	The Summer Program for Verbally and Mathematically Precocious Youth (VAMPY), WKU
July 7-9, 1999	The Building Success in Social Studies Institute, WKU
July 12-16, 1999	The English Vertical Team Institute, WKU
July 12-16, 1999	The Mathematics Vertical Team Institute, WKU
Dec. 4-5, 1999	Leadership III Institute, Institute for Economic Development, WKU South Campus

## Ideas Needed for The Challenge

We want *The Challenge* to speak to you and for you. Please contact The Center with any ideas, articles, or suggestions. We'd also appreciate your prized pictures for possible inclusion. We want your help and insight. You can reach us by phone (502) 745-6323, by fax (502) 745-6279, or by e-mail at [gifted.studies@wku.edu](mailto:gifted.studies@wku.edu).

## Graduate Assistant Opportunities

The Center for Gifted Studies has two graduate student positions available for the 1999-2000 school year. This is an excellent opportunity to combine graduate studies with valuable experience in the gifted and talented arena. Call Dr. Julia Roberts for information at (502) 745-6323.

## Anything New?

You're important to us! Help us be able to contact you. Please let us know of any changes:

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Address \_\_\_\_\_  
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