

# Arts & Letters

The Magazine of Potter College at Western Kentucky University



**Engaging with communities  
across the Commonwealth**



# Message from the Dean

Potter College makes a difference in the lives of Kentuckians. Our faculty, staff, and students are hard at work making Kentucky an even better place to live, and in this edition of *Arts & Letters*, you'll learn about some of the programs that engage the College with communities across the Commonwealth. A top priority for us is working with teachers to improve learning in our schools. As Director of the National Writing Project at WKU, English Professor John Hagaman has spent 25 years helping Kentucky teachers improve the writing skills of their students. In the process, he's secured more than a million dollars in grant funding to support this important work. We've also established a very special partnership with Fort Thomas Highlands in Northern Kentucky that serves as a model for strengthening the tie between high school and college for more students.

We're also working to preserve and interpret the cultural heritage of our Kentucky communities. You'll visit a biological preserve in Hart County where students in Folk Studies and Anthropology are restoring and analyzing the Gardner House, one of the oldest brick structures in this part of Kentucky, a building with a lot to tell us about the people who settled along the Green River.

Providing cultural programming is some of the most important work the College does. You'll meet University Gallery Director Kristina Arnold and learn how our gallery programming is linking campus and community artists and enriching the visual arts for all of us. You'll pull up a pillow and sit down with our Children's Theatre program as they bring shows to children on campus and in the schools around our community. I think you'll be especially intrigued by the story of the unique partnership that has brought string music instruction to Bowling Green and Warren County. It's a remarkable story of innovation and cooperation that created a new opportunity for hundreds of kids.

This issue closes with a warm remembrance of Professor Pat Taylor, our beloved colleague who died this spring. A dynamic, student-oriented teacher, Pat shaped the lives of English and Theatre students in Potter College for 43 years. Walker Rutledge and Mary Ellen Miller remember this inspiring professor.

David Lee  
Dean, Potter College of  
Arts & Letters

# Arts & Letters

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## About the Cover

From left to right: Gardener House, Pre-college strings program, Writing Project Director Dr. John Hagaman, and University Gallery Director Kristina Arnold.

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# Writing a New Future for Kentucky's Citizens

BY DAWN WINTERS



Sometime in the mid-1980s, Dr. John Hagaman was just settling into teaching and researching at WKU. When approached by then English Department Head Joe Millichap, Hagaman and his soon-to-be co-director of ten years, Gretchen Niva, agreed to lead the first Summer Institute in 1987. Backed by state funding and with the support of Jim Grey, the founding father of the National Writing Project (NWP) who came to Kentucky that year to show support of and give direction to the multiple new Projects beginning in the same year, the WKU chapter of the Kentucky Writing Project (KWP) was officially underway.

Potter College's Department of English provides a variety of outreach programs to connect with the larger community, including the WKU Writing Project. Since its beginning, the WKU Writing Project has provided programming to participants from 37 Kentucky counties. "Before in Kentucky, writing was handwriting," observes Hagaman, referring to the Project's beginnings. However, through the efforts of over 500 KWP participants and administrators over the years, composition in Kentucky has expanded to include traditional writing like expository, transactive, and personal essays but also new kinds of writing that encompass trends in technology. "The Writing Project is on Facebook and Twitter," explains Hagaman. "There's a new kind of literacy, a new form of writing. In fact, writing has been redefined as communication. It's a wonderful thing."

The KWP's debut on Facebook and Twitter is just the latest in a long line of outreach programs designed to form a network of teacher-writers from the pool of Project graduates. The Summer Institute, the Project's primary program, is a month-long course that is designed to turn teachers into teacher-writers. Instructors must apply for the institute well in advance and go through an interview process in order to be accepted for the summer. During the month, teachers meet, write, discuss and read about writing, and learn from each other. "It really is teacher led," adds Hagaman.

**"There's a new kind of literacy, a new form of writing. In fact, writing has been redefined as communication. It's a wonderful thing."**

Once the Institute ends, the new class of teacher-writers returns to their respective schools to share what they have learned, participates in Project outreach programs, and becomes a part of a network of teachers across the Commonwealth. Laura Houchens, KWP's Outreach Coordinator, notes that the KWP organizes five to six workshops throughout the year for anyone who wants to participate, including K-12 and university instructors. "There's also the Advanced Institute for previous KWP participants. That lasts three to five days and usually has a theme or topic like 'Reading Across the Curriculum' or 'Inquiry Groups,'" explains Houchens. "We have the Technology Academy in conjunction with the KWP network that doubled in size last summer."

"We had a Holocaust Seminar in Elizabethtown last year," Hagaman adds. "And for two years, we have had a Content Literacy group that began with four teachers and has grown to eight." Overall, this outreach helps to achieve the focus of both the KWP and the NWP which, according to the KWP website, emphasizes "the teaching of writing for practicing teachers while providing a model for ongoing professional development that builds independent local programs."



"The glue that holds it together is writing," Hagaman asserts. Writing may be the glue, but integral to these programs, even Hagaman admits, is money. Over the years, Hagaman has secured over \$1.5 million in grants and has been recognized by both Potter College and WKU for his efforts. "You don't get a lot of grants for Arts & Letters," Hagaman points out. "The science people just laugh at this amount, but for us, it's substantial." Part of the funding is matched by the Dean's office, which helps support the Writing Project Graduate Assistant. The rest of the money is put directly back into the Project. "We are a non-profit organization. Any time you are given money, you find supporting money, apply it to an aspect of the Project, and document how it was spent. The money helps us make an impact and sustain it," adds Hagaman.

Because of funding and through the efforts of Hagaman and his leadership team, the KWP has steadily reached over 500 people since its inception. The past 25 years have seen some change to writing instruction in Kentucky. The Commonwealth led the way in writing instruction reform with the implementation of the Portfolio in the late 1990s. Recently, however, Kentucky changed the portfolio in another effort to modify the way writing is taught. "The teachers felt burdened by the portfolio," observes Hagaman. "It had become the teacher's portfolio." Part of the Summer Institute includes teachers writing their own portfolios, which has not changed, and Hagaman is positive about what is on the horizon for Kentucky. "Each district must design its own portfolio and redefine its uses based on new standards and requirements," adds Hagaman. "It's exciting."

It is this kind of enthusiasm, along with Hagaman's leadership that has contributed to the success of the Project. "I've never heard anyone say [the KWP] has had a negative impact on their teaching," observes Houchens. "For that many people to have bettered themselves through his leadership is more important than the money it brings in." Hagaman, however, gives most of the credit to the teachers. "I hear so many negative things about public school teachers," he reflects. "Everyone wants to blame the smaller fish for bad



Dr. John Hagaman, Director of the WKU Writing Project

grammar or bad writing. I try to stay positive; I've seen so much wisdom in teachers."

For 25 years, Hagaman's home has been in Cherry Hall and amongst the teachers and students of Kentucky. After this year, Hagaman is going into transitional retirement. "They were calling it optional retirement, but I think they changed it because everyone wanted the option," he laughs. "I sense that after 25 years, it's time to hang my hat." In his retirement, he plans to focus on his personal writing and read through self-described towering stacks of books. It's doubtful his interactions with teachers and writers will diminish any time soon. He finishes, "Everybody has a story, something to tell." For the KWP, his may be the most lasting one.

**Editor's Note:**

*The NWP is an initiative that focuses on sustained efforts to improve writing and learning for all learners. Unique in breadth and scale, the NWP is a network of sites anchored at colleges and universities and serving teachers across disciplines and at all levels, early childhood through university. Co-directed by faculty from the local university and from P-12 schools, more than 200 local sites serve all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Sites work in partnership with area school districts to offer high-quality professional development programs for educators.*

*Dawn Winters serves as Academic Director, English as a Second Language International.*



# More Than a Building

BY KATIE WYNN

Folk Studies graduate student Janice Crane scraping down the interior of the Gardner House.

The Gardner House is a small brick house on WKU's Upper Green River Biological Preserve (UGRBP). It might not seem that impressive at first glance, but the Gardner House is historically significant and prized by the local community. Dr. Albert Meier, one of the co-directors of UGRBP, said that when the plans were laid to get the house restored, "we became aware that a lot of local people valued it... It's part of their heritage, even though none of them are related to the people who built the house. It's important to respect the heritage of the people who live there. It's important to them that it's being restored. When we take local people on tours to go to their family graveyards, we always stop at the Gardner House and they like hearing about the (restoration) progress and history of the building." The community's enthusiasm for the house is well deserved; the Gardner House dates from the early 19th century and may be the oldest building in Hart County.

Deciding that they needed someone more experienced with old houses, Dr. Meier and his co-directors contacted Dr. Michael Ann Williams.

Dr. Williams, head of the Department of Folk Studies and Anthropology in WKU's Potter College, is an expert on vernacular architecture. Dr. Meier asked her to take over the care and restoration of the Gardner House. Since then, Potter College's Folk Studies and Anthropology Department has worked on researching, stabilizing, and restoring the Gardner House.

**"Its future as an interpretive center could help to restore that vibrancy and remind the people of the community of their past."**

An important part of the student experience in Folk Studies and Anthropology is the opportunity to enhance classroom learning through outreach initiatives. From the beginning, the Folk Studies and Anthropology students enrolled in architecture, cultural conservation, archaeology, and museum studies classes have worked on the house. The students practice and sharpen the

skills they learn in the classroom while working to preserve this locally important building. So far, the students have assisted with, to name just a few, shovel testing, hand excavation, mapping, artifact processing, mothballing, removing a modern and damaged cement porch, removing and replacing failing mortar, re-plastering the interior, replacing the roof, and refashioning the windows. Graduate students also assist with the research aspects of the project. For example, Folk Studies graduate student Rachel Baum wrote the nomination that resulted in the listing of the Gardner House on the National Register of Historic Places and conducted interviews with former resident Mr. Murl Bush.

Dr. Darlene Applegate, an anthropology professor in Potter College, uses the Gardner House as a kind of “outdoor classroom.” Dr. Applegate commented that besides helping with many aspects of fieldwork, “some of my Applied Archaeology students also assisted with a community outreach event at the house; local boy scouts helped with the fieldwork (excavating and screening) in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the archaeology merit badge.” Dr. Applegate went on to say, “the archaeological

## **“Not many graduate assistants can point to something at the end and say, ‘I did that,’ but our Gardner House students can.”**

investigations of the Gardner House site allowed students to apply classroom training in a real-life archaeological setting... Students expressed pride in contributing to the preservation and interpretation of this very significant site in Hart County. The hands-on experiences they gained at the Gardner House made them more competitive for graduate programs and for jobs in contract archaeology.”

The Folk Studies half of the department has also been heavily involved with the Gardner House. Local restorationist Tonya Taylor worked on the house before becoming a graduate student. During that time, Taylor directed crews of students from the Folk Studies graduate program at the

Gardner House. “I taught a weekend class on stabilization and mothballing, during which the house was made weather and pest-tight. The students seemed to enjoy having a tangible product, a hands-on role in saving a building that mattered to them.” After she enrolled in the Folk Studies master’s program Taylor became the graduate assistant (GA) for the Gardner House. Thanks to the support of the Office of Sponsored Programs and the Potter College Dean’s Office, the Folk Studies and Anthropology Department is able to assign a graduate student exclusively to the Gardner House. During her tenure as GA, Taylor “led students in hands-on work nearly every weekend.” Taylor concluded, “Not many graduate assistants can point to something at the end and say, ‘I did that,’ but our Gardner House students can.”

James Miller joined the Folk Studies master’s program when Taylor graduated and took over the role of GA for the Gardner House. Like Taylor before him, Miller supervises students who come to work on the house. “The house has been an opportunity for students to get hands-on experience with a restoration project,” Miller says. “Beyond the physical labor of restoring the house, the students have been able to be involved with the project in different ways and get exposure to the processes and decisions that are made with such a project.” Miller especially values the work students do on the house because the Gardner House is a “historical and biographical resource for the community.”

As Miller points out, acting as learning laboratory for WKU students is only part of the value of the Gardner House. The Gardner House is also an important asset to the community. Dr. Applegate said the Gardner House “Provides a means of expanding the community’s knowledge of its own past and the lifeways of our ancestors. It provides a means to promote the preservation and protection of all kinds of cultural resources – including standing structures and archaeological sites – among local community members.” For these reasons, the Folk Studies and Anthropology Department hope that the Gardner House will one day be a site dedicated to preserving the natural and cultural history of the Green River region.





Folk Studies graduate assistant James Miller and undergraduate folklore minor Kohl Threlkeld replacing the roof of the Gardner House.

Taylor emphasized the importance of the work the department is doing toward making the Gardner House available for the public, "The house itself has the potential to be a source of pride for the community. It was a very expensive house to build, indicating that there was once a very wealthy and vibrant community there. Its future as an interpretive center could help to restore that vibrancy and remind the people of the community of their past."

Toward that end, this semester students in Dr. Williams's museum studies class are working on developing exhibits for the Gardner House. Dr. Williams said, "The museum class is developing interpretive materials. We are planning to have an open house at the end of April for those at WKU and in the community who are interested in the Gardner House."

Since 2005, Potter College's Folk Studies and Anthropology Department has worked hard to

study, protect, and restore the Gardner House to its former glory. In their efforts to preserve this piece of history for the community, students and faculty have braved the elements and done more construction work than many probably thought they would ever do. But all the effort has been worth it and the reason was easy for Taylor to summarize: for both the community and the students and faculty who work on it, "The Gardner House is more than a building; it is a source of pride."

*Katie Wynn is a graduate student in the Folk Studies program at WKU. The photos were taken by Chris Fryer, a photojournalism major and folklore minor. For those who want to learn more about the Gardner House, please contact Dr. Williams at [michael.williams@wku.edu](mailto:michael.williams@wku.edu).*

Kristina Arnold, assistant professor in Art and University Gallery Director

# Connecting Campus & Community Through Art

BY RACHEL WALSTON

Where some people see a community, Kristina Arnold sees an opportunity.

As part of her mission as University Gallery Director and assistant professor in the Department of Art, Arnold regularly bridges the gap between campus and community. It's a mission that she—as well as the entire department—takes seriously.

"I see my role not just as outreach into the community, but also trying to broadcast what the gallery means," she said, which includes "having WKU faculty and students be physically present in the community... and making sure WKU has a seat at the table, and not as an 'elbow-yourself-in' kind of way, but when people ask you, you say yes."

Shortly after her arrival at WKU in August 2005, Arnold took over the new Corridor Gallery in the Fine Arts Center. Similar to an airport gallery, the Corridor Gallery was created to brighten up a dreary section of a busy second-floor hallway with campus artwork, showcasing talent from other departments as well as the Department of Art. The first exhibition came from the Department of Philosophy and Religion, and featured photographs of Holocaust survivors and concentration camp liberators. "Living On" was displayed both in the Corridor Gallery and in the Helm Library.

"I thought it was important to speak to a broader audience than just ourselves," Arnold said.

That thought drives Arnold's work as gallery director and art professor. Sharing ideas and working together are paramount to the success of both the Department of Art and the local community. Arnold described her process: "Here, we have an idea. What can come out of that? How can we create community involvement from this project?"

One of the essential aspects of the Department of Art is education, said department head Brent Oglesbee, and "that doesn't end with our students. Part of being here is to educate and serve this region."

Both Arnold and Oglesbee recalled a very successful event that took place during WKU's Centennial in 2006. Arnold worked with renowned artist Carol Ann Carter to bring an exhibition commemorating both the centennial and the 50th anniversary of the university's desegregation. In partnership with the Capitol Arts Theatre, which jointly hosted the exhibition, the program brought together not only WKU and the community, but various departments on campus as well. Carter

interviewed numerous students and community members for a multimedia presentation that was broadcast on campus and in downtown Bowling Green.

"I don't think there had ever been an exhibition like that before, on the Hill and off the Hill," Arnold said.

Before Arnold joined the Department of Art, the gallery, which hosts about two dozen exhibitions each year, was managed by a part-time director, then a committee of faculty members, Oglesbee said. Creating a new full-time gallery director position was a "godsend," he said, and Arnold has done well navigating the challenges that come with bringing the campus and community together.

"She's been a real spark plug to a lot of positives," he said. "She's very good at helping us be seen as a force on campus."

Arnold has also held roles in the local arts community including the Capitol Arts Alliance board, member of ArtWorks: A Visual Arts Coalition; and co-founder of the Bowling Green Gallery Hop, an event designed to welcome southcentral Kentuckians into several Bowling Green galleries to see local artists' works. She isn't the only Department of Art professor to do so. Everyone in the department is engaged with local projects, some reaching as far as Louisville and Nashville, Oglesbee said. Professor Miwon Choe works with local teachers and WKU's Super Saturdays program, while the graphic design professors and their students are solicited by both the on-campus and off-campus community. Art faculty lend their talents to make significant contributions to the Bowling Green campus. Mike Nichols, associate professor of Art, is heading up mural development in Van Meter Hall, Oglesbee recently received a request to design a mural for the new Chandler Chapel, and Nichols and Yvonne Petkus offer a free drawing session with a model each week for campus and community members.

"While Kristina is highly visible in the community, all of our faculty contribute in ways that blend and coordinate with her," Oglesbee said.

Lynn O'Keefe, co-owner of Gallery at 916 in downtown Bowling Green, has known Arnold for several years through her work with the Gallery Hop and the Capitol Arts Theatre. Arnold and O'Keefe also work closely together finding opportunities for

students to complete internships, show artwork, and assist community artists.

"We're always pleased to have her students come in the gallery and help them with the assignments they're doing," she said. "We really appreciate the way she sends the students off-campus to see what else is out there."

Bringing folks onto the Hill is sometimes challenging, Oglesbee said, but a new partnership with the WKU Farm has everyone excited. Working together with the Department of Agriculture, Arnold is hoping to develop a community-based facility that will also offer workshops for students, particularly in the area of ceramics. The University does not

## One of the essential aspects of the Department of Art is education.

currently have a wood-fired kiln, nor is there the space for one in the Fine Arts Center, so the WKU Farm became the perfect location. Other departments are interested in the project as well, meaning that "art on the farm" could potentially bring together multiple WKU departments, community and regional artists, and local residents—a true blending of audiences.

"Kristina really is our face with the community," Oglesbee said. "She has a natural affinity for seeking relationships. I would say she has probably been most successful about drawing our energies out into the community."

For Arnold, cultivating relationships and working together are ideas she learned as a child. She studied at Brown University, which emphasizes service learning, and spent a year with AmeriCorps.

"I feel like I've learned a lot from every step I've taken," she said. "Teaching reminds you every day about how the learning process is circular. You learn as much from everyone around you as you have to share. I think being open to the learning experiences that present themselves all the time is really important."

*Rachael Watson is an Admissions Counselor at WKU, and a proud alumna of the Potter College of Arts & Letters (M.A. Communication, '09).*

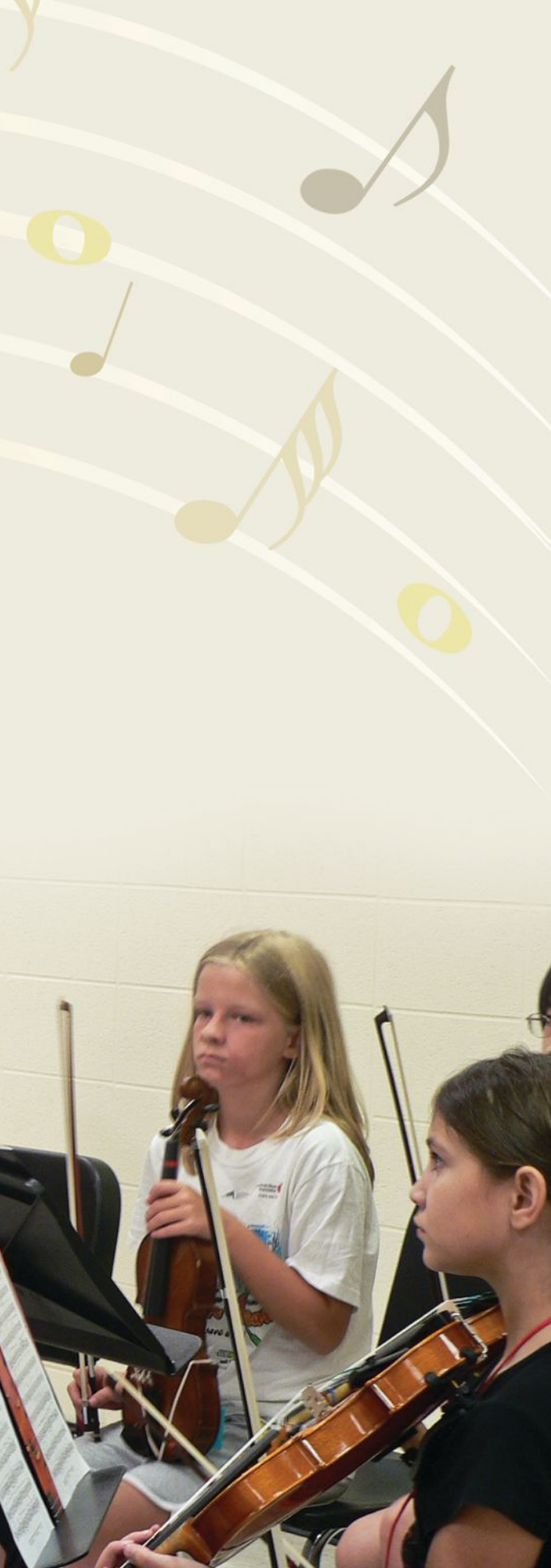


# Not Simply Music

## Strings Attached

BY SHARON WOODWARD





Dr. Ching-Yi Lin works with a group of students during String Explosion

The idea for a children's string program was born in 2003 through a donation by Jerry Baker, a WKU supporter and local philanthropist. In addition to teaching at WKU and serving as the conductor for The Symphony, the endowed professorship created by Baker coordinates efforts to develop a children's string program. Accepting the position in 2003 as the first Baker Professor, Dr. Bill Scott took on the challenge. The Pre-College String Development Program began that fall with 22 private lessons on WKU's main campus and 21 students at a local elementary school. Since then, the program has exploded, growing to include two area school districts and hundreds of students.

Among the Department of Music's many outreach initiatives, the children's string program is among the most successful. The pre-college program operates through a partnership between the WKU Department of Music and the Division of Extended Learning and Outreach (DELO). DELO coordinates marketing and registration for the program while the Music Department provides the classroom facilities. The Music Department and DELO share responsibility for compensation of the instructors.

At its inception, the program's goals were to enhance WKU's visibility with area musicians, connect it positively to the community, and develop string instruction to local public schools. It has been enormously successful. Beginning with one faculty member in 2003, the program has expanded to include two professionals-in-residence, two part-time artist faculty and one graduate assistant. The program has provided instruction to hundreds of students through private lessons and a partnership with the local public school districts.

There are currently over 400 students taking string orchestra classes from ten schools in Warren County and all seven of the Bowling Green Independent Schools. Forty-five area students are enrolled in violin, viola and cello private lessons. Students in both the school programs and private lessons have multiple performance opportunities, including solo recitals, collaborative school concerts, and guest performances with The Symphony.





Warren County Schools Orchestra Director Amberly Bush thanks attendees for their support during the Holiday Concert at South Warren auditorium.

Through the program, students take private and group lessons at the Fine Arts Center. Dr. Mitzi Groom, head of WKU's Department of Music, says that the program has grown so much that they hope to have their own facility off-campus one day. "It's great to have families on the WKU campus, but there is limited access to parking for the growing number of visitors the program creates," says Groom. "Having our own facility would make it more convenient for students and their families to attend classes."

For now, parents are happy to bring their children to campus. "Carly has been playing with WKU's pre-college strings program since she was in first grade," says Debra Shoulders, whose daughter is in the program. "It has made Carly feel like she is part of WKU. The individual and group recitals have given her more self confidence and increased her self-esteem."

Having multiple instructors within the program has also benefited the students, allowing them to work with instructors who have different "unique strengths and teaching styles," according to Amy Guyer, whose daughter Layne "has benefited

so much from the strings program." She says working with two different instructors has helped her daughter, but what has been most helpful is playing with other musicians. "Anyone who has attempted to master a musical instrument will know that playing with others is so encouraging and much more fun."

**"Anyone who has attempted to master a musical instrument will know that playing with others is so encouraging and much more fun."**

The arrival of Dr. Ching-Yi Lin in 2009 brought an increased emphasis on group instruction and performance. Dr. Lin added more group classes and encouraged a stronger performance connection with The Symphony, for which she serves as concertmaster. With Dr. Lin's support, the pre-college students have performed with The Symphony four times.





The program has also provided learning and employment opportunities for students of WKU's music education program. Amberly Bush is a WKU Alumna and Warren County Orchestra teacher whose career goals were inspired by the program. "Upon seeing the impact and advantages of a string program for students, I decided to spend the remainder of my collegiate career focusing on the string education aspect of my degree," says Bush. "This decision has proven to be a turning point in my life and career because it has led me to where I am today as the first string educator in the Warren County school district."

Bush was introduced to the program as a WKU student and began working in the program as a graduate assistant. When she began, instruction was available at Cumberland Trace, Natcher and Briarwood Elementary schools as well as Drakes Creek Middle School. Classes have now been added at Plano, Rich Pond and Alvaton Elementary schools, South Warren Middle School, and Greenwood and South Warren High schools. Classes in the school system are taught by Bush, WKU cello professional-in-residence Sarah Berry, and WKU graduate assistant Susan Houghton.

Orchestra classes in the Bowling Green Independent School district began in 2004. Due to the enormous interest within the city schools, the district created an orchestra director position in 2007 and hired Patrick O'Rourke. It added a part-time teacher the following year.

As an extension of the Pre-College String Development Program, the University also offers a camp each summer called *String Explosion!* The four day camp provides an opportunity for area string students of all ages to participate in sectionals and group classes. Bush, Berry, and O'Rourke have all served as faculty of the camp, which provides a great way for instructors to maintain contact with students during the summer.

Kevin and Carol Crowe have two daughters in the program. "Our family has been impressed with the opportunities that have been available to our girls through this exemplary program, such as the *String Explosion!* summer camp, the String Invitational, and the privilege of playing directly alongside WKU's Symphony Orchestra. The dedication of the instructors and department does

not end with musical instruction, but continues with the enrichment of their experiences through group classes, masters classes, recitals, and special performances".

Prior to 2003, Bowling Green was noted for being the largest city in the Commonwealth without a public school strings program. With the generosity of one man and the vision and dedication of many, WKU has extended its talent and resources into the local public schools and community. According to the Crowes, it's about more than just music lessons. "To have a program like this available in our community opens the world of music to our children, which, we believe, is a vital part of their education and development."

*Sharon Woodward is Director, Continuing Education, in the Division of Extended Learning and Outreach. (DELO). Special thanks to Susan Esters, DELO Marketing Specialist, for her assistance with this article.*



Children from the pre-college string program perform with The Symphony during the "Welcome Home" concert at Van Meter Hall.



Lydia Speer performs during the Christmas Recital held at Christ Episcopal Church.





# TRANSFORMING YOUTH THROUGH

the

# MAGIC OF THEATRE

BY STACEY GISH





Madeline Gannon and Robert Sharkey appear in WKU's Children's Theatre production of "Furry Tales With a Twist."

The Department of Theatre and Dance enjoys a long history of outreach and service within the Southcentral Kentucky region. Dr. David Young, department head, remembers when he arrived at WKU outreach fulfilled an integral part of the curriculum. Young coordinated the children's outreach efforts from 1999 until he was named department head in 2009, and relinquished the duties to Instructor Carol Jordan.

Young said the majority of the department's outreach activities involve youth and children. Not only does the department offer several children-specific productions through the Children's Theatre Series, but they donate box office profits to children's charities such as the Camp for Courageous Kids in Scottsville, host school groups touring WKU theatre facilities, provide educational

programs for non-profit organizations such as Girls, Inc., teach gifted students through the WKU Super Saturdays program, and direct plays for elementary school drama clubs and juvenile detention facilities. But one of the most requested outreach efforts began as an answer to statewide changes in K-12 curriculum.

Passed in the early 1990s, the Kentucky Education Reform Act increased requirements for the arts and humanities in the public schools. The Theatre and Dance department offered its services to local educators needing enhanced educational experiences through theatre and dance. The department created a course specifically designed to allow WKU students the opportunity to select and produce plays that they tour to schools all around the region.



"It's all them," Young said about the students in the Produce Children's Theatre course. The students select the script, actors, and stage personnel. They organize themselves each production day and handle logistics, budgeting, and all planning efforts. Students even stick around after the show to teach groups of elementary students theatre terminology and other concepts that may appear on statewide tests through workshops and question-answer sessions. They take their show to about 15 different schools during the semester, performing in front of between 4,000 and 8,000 students, and conduct after-show workshops for as many as 200 students a session. They try to accommodate as many schools as possible, even if they aren't located within Warren County. They've been known to travel as far north as Hart County and as far west as Todd County.

Theatre alumni Holly Yokley recalls her experience serving as the traveling group's tour manager in the fall of 2006. "Eight of us shared a van for up to 12 hours a week all semester, and we were truly a family by the end of it," she said. "My duties as tour manager included (but were not limited to) securing money for breakfast, purchasing snacks, getting directions, diffusing fights, and making sure everything was packed." Yokley said her fellow

students gave her the nickname "Mom" because of her efforts. "Many of us first became interested in theatre at a young age, even if we didn't act on it until later in life, so it's great to realize that our performance could pique a child's lifelong interest in the arts," she said.

While it may seem fun to many students to receive credit for traveling and performing, several theatre alumni and students also say that there is a bit of pressure being responsible for what the younger students are learning. "It can be stressful feeling responsible for so many kids, but it's also rewarding," Yokley said.

Current WKU student and theatre major Lusie Cuskey added that children learn important life lessons from their experiences in the theatre. Whether it's through the Super Saturdays program that she co-teaches four times a semester, the schoolwide productions that she helps students with at local elementary schools, or the workshops she conducts after the children's tour show, she enjoys spending time with the children. "They never fail to surprise you with how much, and how well, they can do when you give them the tools and time," Cuskey said. "Involvement in theatre from a young age enables kids to develop skill sets that will serve



"Furry Tales With a Twist"  
cast ensemble, from left:  
Madeline Gannon, Robert  
Sharkey, Josh Gustafson,  
and Lusie Cuskey.

them well later in life, whatever they end up doing.” Cuskey feels that giving back to the students outside of the WKU community is important. “I love theatre; I want to help a new generation of children learn to love it, too,” she said. “The chance to put a kid on a ‘stage’ and show them that who they are is fascinating is special.”

While most of the elementary students that the theatre department serves won’t become actors or dancers, many undergo a process where they realize their talents or they simply come out of their shells.

“We had a kid who was very disruptive and grumpy, and we found out he liked to draw, so we let him design the sets for the show. It was like having a completely different child to work with once he had something to do he felt good about,” Cuskey said. “We had some very shy, quiet students in our Super Saturdays class, and it was fun to watch them blossom, and go from just kind of mumbling their names at the beginning to performing in front of all their parents and peers at the end.”

**“Many undergo a process where they realize their talents or they simply come out of their shells.”**

A passion for children’s theatre education ends up in the blood of these WKU students and they want to pursue it as a career. As a student, Corey Morrison participated in the touring show called, “Everybody Dance Now,” and simply couldn’t get enough of the experience. He helped write the script for the show, directed the next fall’s tour, and served as a teaching assistant for the class.

“One of my favorite memories from doing the tour show was when I was able to perform at my own elementary school and see some of my old teachers,” Morrison said. “As cliché and corny as it may be, there was a sense of pride and accomplishment in myself, being able to say, ‘this is what I want to do with my life.’” Today, Morrison is the Education Program Manager at Long Wharf Theatre in New Haven, CT, where he leads the educational programming for K-8 audience and the Student Theatre Series.



Robert Sharkey as Sam in “Furry Tales With a Twist”

“I know that I would not be where I am today without the unique opportunities that were available to me through WKU’s Department of Theatre and Dance,” Morrison said. Offering similar opportunities to children is key to why he loves what he does for a living.

“The practical benefits of participating in the arts are countless. Not only does it give children the opportunity to focus their creativity, but also it’s a place where children learn to express themselves,” he said. “Children who participate in theatre and dance tend to be more outgoing, sociable, and shy away from poor behavior. Nothing gives me more joy than seeing my students smile, offering them a place of possibility where they can use their imaginations without fear of being criticized.”

**Editors Note:**

*During the fall 2010 semester, the director, stage manager, and cast of Furry Tails with a Twist traveled to 11 schools in six different counties to perform this production for thousands of local elementary and middle school students.*

*Stacey Gish is an Instructor in the Department of Communication.*



Partnership announcement. From left: WKU alumni Liz McMurray, John Burt, President Ransdell, Ken and Carolyn Honchell, Jaime Walz Richey, and Todd Dykes.



# A Perfect Partnership

BY SALLY RAY

Fort Thomas Highlands High School (Kentucky) junior Max Colvill has a passion for theatre. When it comes time to select a college where he intends to pursue that passion, he knows he won't have to go far because WKU's Department of Theatre and Dance offers one of the best theatre programs in the country. Says Max, "I now have the advantage of perfecting my craft in theatre before even stepping foot on campus, and I get college credit for it." With a recent partnership between WKU's Potter College of Arts & Letters (PCAL) and Highlands High School, Max and other Highlands' students have the opportunity to get a head start on their projected program of study at WKU by earning college credit as part of the high school curriculum.

Potter College recognizes high school students as one of its important constituent groups and considers dual credit programs a significant part of its off-campus outreach efforts. At WKU, PCAL has taken the lead in creating an innovative model offering a wide variety of dual credit options for students pursuing post-secondary education in communications and the performing arts. Last summer, Fort Thomas Highlands High School established a partnership with Potter College of Arts & Letters and WKU's Dual Credit Program to offer the Capstone Scholars Program for high school students interested in these areas. The partnership was announced on November 1, 2010, during a school assembly at Fort Thomas Highlands High School that featured WKU President Gary

Ransdell, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management Dale Brown, Potter College Dean David Lee, and Big Red.

Gene Kirchner, Highlands Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, is enthusiastic about the new partnership with WKU. As one of the primary architects of the agreement, Kirchner says "The Capstone Scholars

when Highlands Superintendent John Williamson approached WKU about a potential collaboration in communications and the performing arts. Williamson, says, "WKU has long been recognized for its excellence in communications and the performing arts. I felt strongly that together we could create something special for Highlands' students and WKU."

## **"I now have the advantage of perfecting my craft in theatre before even stepping foot on campus, and I get college credit for it."**

Program at Highlands High School is designed around specific learning goals and objectives and provides opportunities for real-world experiences that have been built into the curriculum as well as dual credit opportunities with WKU." The agreement enables WKU and Highlands High School to offer a discipline specific series of dual credit to high school students for the designation of "capstone scholar" upon graduation from Highlands High. Along with dual credit, Highlands' students and instructors are connected with WKU communications and performing arts faculty through mentoring and programming opportunities on the WKU campus. The goal is to then transition these high school students straight from their capstone program at Highlands into communications and performing arts majors and minors at WKU.

Scott Stroot, WKU Professor of Theatre and Dance, serves as a mentor and consultant to the Highlands' drama program and faculty. The opportunity to connect so directly with a strong secondary school like Fort Thomas Highlands is exciting for Professor Stroot and other PCAL faculty in the performing arts and communications. Says Stroot, "There's no shortage of good ideas about how to make the transition from high school into college more seamless and meaningful, but programs that actually put these ideas into practice are still the exception, rather than the rule. If it works as well as I believe it will, this is a win for WKU and for Fort Thomas Highlands."

Initial discussions about a partnership between WKU and Highlands High School started

Highlands High School is home to high achievers in academics, arts and athletics. The school was recognized as a 2007 U.S. Department of Education Blue Ribbon School and named one of "America's Best High Schools" by the recent US News & World Report "America's Best High Schools 2009." The school was named one of only 504 Silver Medal Schools in the entire country out of more than 21,000 high schools. For sixteen consecutive years, Fort Thomas Independent Schools has ranked as Kentucky's highest performing K-12 public school district.

Superintendent Williamson looks forward to working with WKU and offering the Capstone Scholars Program to Highlands High School students. "We are thrilled to partner with WKU. This partnership provides our students with many opportunities to learn from top journalism and theatre programs in the country," said Williamson.



WKU President Gary Ransdell and Fort Thomas Highlands Independent Schools Superintendent John Williamson sign the partnership agreement.





WKU's Big Red with Highlands High School Bluebird

WKU President Gary Ransdell expressed his excitement about encouraging and challenging high school students with dual credit coursework and helping pave the way for students to participate in undergraduate programs of study at WKU. "We are honored to be recognized by Fort Thomas Highlands as an institution that excels in both performing arts and communications," said Dr. Ransdell. "We look forward to seeing Capstone Scholars evolve into Potter College and Honors College students at WKU."

Students who complete the Capstone Scholars Program in Mass Communications or Performing Arts at Highlands High School and plan to study at WKU in the areas of communication or performing arts will be considered for one of five \$1,000 scholarships that WKU will award to program participants.

Since WKU's Dual Credit Program was re-launched in 2005 under the University's Division of Extended Learning and Outreach, departments within Potter College of Arts & Letters have increased their involvement in the delivery of dual credit courses. Currently, five departments in Potter College have partnered with the Dual

Credit Program (Modern Languages, Sociology, Communication, Theatre and Dance, and Journalism and Broadcasting) to make courses available to Kentucky high school students. Not only does dual credit allow high school students to make substantial progress toward college degrees while fulfilling high school credit, it also exposes them to more rigorous college-level classes which is helpful in transitioning from high school to college.

Laura Ricke, WKU's Director of Cohort Programs and Dual Credit, applauds the new partnership. "The partnership between WKU's Potter College and Fort Thomas Highlands has raised the College's profile in Northern Kentucky and drawn considerable attention from other schools and may serve as a model for similar partnerships with other high schools," says Ricke.

As for Max Colvill and students like him, the WKU-Highlands partnership provides a perfect way to prepare for the college experience prior to arriving on the Hill. "I'm really excited about this program because it gives students more opportunities and possibilities to communicate and participate at the collegiate level," added Colvill.

## IN MEMORIAM

**Patricia M. Taylor**

Dr. Patricia M. Taylor, Professor of English, died suddenly on March 19, 2011. Pat was one of the most senior faculty members at WKU, currently in her 43rd year of full-time teaching at the University. Very student-oriented, Pat was a dynamic teacher who had an enormous impact on hundreds of students over her long career. She was also a talented and creative stage actor who created numerous roles over the year. As recently as last fall she gave an impressive performance in the demanding role of Linda Loman in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*.



Dr. Pat Taylor at the 2005 English department Christmas Party.



In the following essay and poem, English professors Walker Rutledge and Mary Ellen Miller reflect on the loss of their longtime friend and colleague, Pat Taylor.

## For Patricia

*What is that sound?  
That muted sound?  
Is it the sound of my heart knocking?*

*Or is it you,  
my dear, dear friend,  
come back to say,  
"It's okay.  
Come on in.  
The water's fine"?*

*I swim and swim  
and gasp for air, enough  
to float my heart somehow.  
I stroke the deep, cold water,  
hear the pipes,  
and smell the Scottish heather.*

Mary Ellen Miller

## Pat Taylor

*Flame-haired and with a temperament to match, Pat Minton Taylor was neither timorous nor indecisive. Oh no! She was a force of nature, like wind. When she breezed into a classroom, students knew that she was in charge, that the professor had arrived, and that this professor was not afraid to profess. They might not initially agree with her, but they definitely knew where she stood. For she was a liberal and proud of it, an assertive spokesperson for youth, humanity, and tolerance. By the end of the semester, her students were invariably grateful to have had her articulate their own intellectual growth and to be their academic leader. After all, she had that oft-touted but seldom-realized quality known as charisma—which is not a learned skill but an innate gift that is bestowed upon exceptional individuals capable of securing the allegiance of others.*

Walker Rutledge

These same students not only enrolled in class after class that Pat taught, but they literally followed her to the ends of the earth. Whenever Jim Flynn, Joe Glaser, or others of us who did study-tours abroad learned that Pat was also recruiting students for an expedition, we immediately changed our plans. Only folly would prompt a person to compete with Pat for the same pool of students.

Like solidity and extension, Pat was a physical presence, but a presence charged with boundless sparks of energy. When she entered a room, atmosphere and space instantly changed, became flamboyantly animated. Life and its infinite possibilities had arrived. Torpor had been defeated, relegated to the nether world. And it was this animal magnetism that so enlivened her performances as an actress. I had seen Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* countless times, but when I saw Pat play the role of Linda Loman in last fall's production, I witnessed a depth, a dimension to that character that I had never seen before, for Pat gave Linda a physicality to match her emotional turmoil. She was suddenly real, a person with whom everyone in the audience could relate. Only an actress comfortable with her own body and comfortable with the physical world could capture that quality.

Pat was an especially powerful role model for her female students. She championed female achievement with full-throated vigor. What was equally engaging, though, was that she adored men. She really adored them! She liked being around them, talking to them, and, yes, gamely flirting with them. She liked handsome men. And the more handsome they were, the better she liked them. And they liked her. Once at a literary conference during a crowded late-afternoon cocktail party, I saw her effect upon a seemingly dreary group of male academics. Not long after Pat arrived, a coterie of male admirers had gathered around her, listening to her every bantering word. Suddenly they were not dreary any more, moving in orbit around this cynosure of attraction. Like Amanda Wingfield in *The Glass Menagerie*, a character whom Pat played to critical acclaim on more than one occasion, Pat understood gentlemen callers and surely understood the art of conversation with men.

Friday evening, March 18th, the evening before Pat's passing, I was privileged to spend some time

with her in her hospital room. I had arrived shortly after 7p.m. A caution sign on the outer door of the intensive-care unit indicated that the official visitation period was over, but I quietly poked my head in anyway and was heartily greeted by Pat, who invited me in with gusto. For the next hour and a half, she was her usual hard-charging self, optimistically talking about her health, but mostly about her teaching and her love for her students. She was wonderfully upbeat. The heart problem was only an inconvenience, she felt. Her real concern was for her devoted husband and son, who were worried about her. But once her surgery was behind her, she would surely be in the pink when it came time to lead her students on a study-tour of Greece during May and June.

**Like solidity and extension, Pat was a physical presence, but a presence charged with boundless sparks of energy.**

Several times during our visit I asked Pat if she was tired. "No," she insisted; "please stay." Even when a tech person came in to check her temperature, Pat politely shooed her away, asking her to come back later.

Then, as was our usual wont, we started talking about literature, our mutual passion. She asked about the Eugene O'Neill course that I taught during Winter Term, which somehow got us to talking about O'Neill's Nobel Prize acceptance speech in which he acknowledged August Strindberg as his major influence. Pat became even more enthusiastic. "You know, Walker, KIIS offers a Scandinavian course. Wouldn't you just love to teach Strindberg and Ibsen on location? In a couple of years, I might try to do exactly that. Wouldn't that be exciting?" I concurred, of course. Pat was thinking about future teaching assignments, future travels with her students.

At that point another tech person arrived, this time to draw blood. It was now after 8:30 p.m. and time for me to go. We had had one of the most enjoyable, wide-ranging, and yet personal







conversations that we had ever had together. I started to leave, and then I turned back and told Pat that I loved her, something that I had never said to her before. She stopped the nurse's aide for a moment, looked at me directly and said, "I love you, too, Sweetie. Thank you for coming," waving an affectionate goodbye. I shall always cherish her remark, and additionally cherish it because she called me Sweetie. Not even my mother called me that.

I am angry about Pat's departure. It violates the very laws of nature that she so fully embodied. The rest of us have aged, for example, but Pat was ageless. She really was! It was as if she were in command of the aging process and had chosen to reverse it. Twenty-year-old coeds were even known to say in my presence that Pat had better-looking legs than they did. I'm also angry because Pat didn't smoke, didn't drink alcoholic beverages of any kind, wasn't overweight, ate a balanced diet, exercised, and had no history of heart disease in her family. She did everything right, had none of the lifestyle indicators that might lead doctors to suspect heart disease, and yet she succumbed. It's not fair. It defies logic. If the Fates can't do a better job of overseeing our lives than this, I'm tempted to suggest that we

all buy Lazy-Boy Rocker Recliners, take up smoking cigarettes, and pursue menus of Big Macs with extra-greasy fries.

Pat often told me that she planned to teach until she died, and, indeed, she did. That is both our source of sorrow and source of consolation. To borrow from Emily Dickinson, we can say that Pat Taylor's life was like a bugle, noisily waking us up to the ecstasy of living. Yes, she was a force of nature, but especially was she a source of velocity and light. She traveled from the full, dawn and meridian in one. The arrival of Dr. Pat Taylor at Western Kentucky University graced us with an extraordinary era of incandescence. Her departure has left us trying to learn how to cope with an eclipse.

*A scholarship has been established in Dr. Pat Taylor's memory through the College Heights Foundation. For more information, contact the Patricia Minton Taylor Memorial Scholarship Fund for English Literature Students, College Heights Foundation, WKU, 1906 College Heights Boulevard, Bowling Green, Kentucky 42101-1016, or phone (270) 745-5266.*







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