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## Barren County education pioneer to join WKU's Hall of Distinguished Alumni

By AARON MUDD [amudd@bgdailynews.com](mailto:amudd@bgdailynews.com) Jul 20, 2018

Becky Ann Gelke Baker (from left), Nettie Bayless Courts Depp and Dr. Richard C. Rink will be inducted into Western Kentucky University's Hall of Distinguished Alumni.

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A Barren County educator who led education reform efforts and became the county's first woman elected to public office will be inducted into Western Kentucky University's Hall of Distinguished Alumni this fall.

Nettie Bayless Courts Depp will be honored along with Emmy-nominated actress Becky Ann Gelke Baker and Dr. Richard C. Rink, a pediatric urologist and surgeon, according to a news release.

The alumni will be recognized during a luncheon at 11 a.m. Oct. 26 at the Sloan Convention Center during WKU's homecoming celebration.

More information about the event is available by contacting the WKU Alumni Association at 270-745-2586 or by visiting [alumni.wku.edu/hoda18](http://alumni.wku.edu/hoda18).

Ginny Hensley, director of alumni programming, said the recognition is the highest honor for alumni and is meant to showcase those who have reached distinction in their fields. It's also meant to reach students and to "encourage them and to show them what can happen in their future as well," Hensley said.

Depp ran for Barren County's school superintendent in 1913, seven years before women could legally vote.

Born on Nov. 21, 1874, Depp attended Southern Normal School, which was the precursor to WKU. She studied with WKU founder and its first president, Henry Hardin Cherry, and his brother T.C. Cherry.

After teaching in several rural schools, Depp served as Barren County Schools' superintendent from 1914-1917. She was also the first WKU graduate to be elected as a county superintendent of schools, according to the WKU news release.

During her tenure as superintendent, she founded the district's first four-year high school, built and repaired schoolhouses and added water wells and outhouses. She also improved academic opportunities for students by adding music, art and business courses and helped enforce school attendance. County school attendance tripled during her tenure, the release said.

Depp finished her career as a teacher in Scottsville from 1923-31 and died the next year. Her work has been honored with several accolades, including a life-size bronze sculpture that will stand inside the Kentucky Capitol.

Rink, a 1974 graduate of WKU, currently serves as a surgical director for the CARES Foundation at its Comprehensive Care Center at Riley Hospital in Indianapolis. The center brings together experts in the treatment of congenital adrenal hyperplasia, which is a group of genetic conditions that limits hormone production in the adrenal glands.

Baker, who graduated from WKU in 1975, is a Broadway, film and television actress perhaps best known for her role in the hit HBO series "Girls."



Baker's character, Loreen Horvath, is the mother of the lead character, Hannah, played by Lena Dunham. In the first episode of the series, Baker's character and her TV husband, played by Peter Scolari, tell Hannah they're cutting her off and that they'll stop covering her rent and other expenses she accrues living in New York City.

That role put her in the running for an Emmy last year and got her two Critics Choice nominations, according to the release.

Despite the accolades she's received, those who know Baker said she hasn't forgotten her roots as a theater major at WKU.

"She's been just the ideal alumna," said David Young, head of WKU's Department of Theater and Dance.

Baker continues to mentor students and help aspiring actors into the business, Young said.

"She should certainly be in the Hall of Distinguished Alumni," he said.

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## Aaron Mudd

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