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## Area students accepted to Gatton Academy on WKU's campus

By Bobbie Hayse Messenger-Inquirer  
Apr 23, 2021



Jenna Waltrip

By Bobbie Hayse Messenger-Inquirer

Five area students have been accepted to the Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science, located on Western Kentucky University's campus in Bowling Green.

The academy is a living and learning experience for students entering their junior year of high school. They complete that year, as well as their senior year while living in WKU's Florence Schneider Hall.

By the end of their high school career, they will have also earned a minimum of at least 60 college credit hours.

Maria Pfeifer, an Owensboro Catholic High School sophomore, Lila Jones, Owensboro High School sophomore, and Hakeem Kalik, Jenna Waltrip, and Matthew Hendrix, all three sophomores at Daviess County High School, have been welcomed into Gatton's Class of 2023.

Maria, daughter of Mark and Holly Pfeifer, wanted to attend the prestigious high school which is one of the best in the country, because of the opportunities it will provide her. Owensboro Catholic offers a lot for students, she said, but it is small.

"We have a lot of opportunities at Owensboro Catholic High School, but because we are small we don't have the same as those offered at Gatton," Maria said. "I'm excited to be more challenged, and to have more research opportunities."

Lila is the daughter of Randy and Elizabeth Jones. Her brother, Nathan, also attended Gatton. She is good at math, but was nervous about attending the school because the subject isn't her only passion.

"My brother would come home and tell me how fun it was, and how you don't just have to be 'all math' " and that the school offers other programming, like a STEM-plus package that includes Mandarin Chinese, Arabic, and Russian. "I will be in the Arabis STEM-plus program starting next year, and that's what really caught my eye."

Matthew, son of Kendra and Jeff Hendrix, said he is excited to attend Gatton because of the school's wonderful math and science programs. He has had a passion for math since he was young, he said, and he hopes to build upon that throughout his time at Gatton.



Lila Jones



Maria Pfeifer

“I also have enjoyed studying various sciences as a student, which I wish to continue,” he said. “My time at Gatton will help prepare me for my education after I graduate high school. Considering the level of classes and expectations at Gatton, I hope to gain experiences that will prepare me for my years in college.”

Jenna, daughter of Alicia and Dewayne Waltrip, has wanted to apply to Gatton since she saw its booth at a seventh-grade ceremony she attended. The motivating community are what drew her to the school, and the opportunities in research she will have while attending.

“After receiving my acceptance letter, I was ecstatic, and had to read over the word ‘congratulations’ around 15 times until it really sunk in,” Jenna said. “Overall, I am very grateful to have this opportunity.”

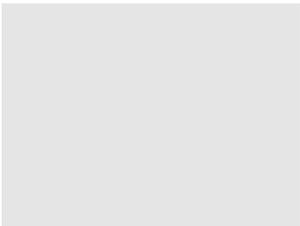
Multiple attempts to reach Hakeem were unsuccessful at the time of this report. Hakeem is the son of Zeenathul and Dr. Aseedu Kalik.

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Hakeem Kalik

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Matthew Hendrix

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