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Summer 2001

The Challenge: The Newsletter of The Center for Gifted Studies

The Center for Gifted Studies

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WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

the challenge

NEWSLETTER OF THE CENTER FOR GIFTED STUDIES ✎ *SUMMER 2001, NO. 7*

A New Scholarship Endowed by the Doctors Mody

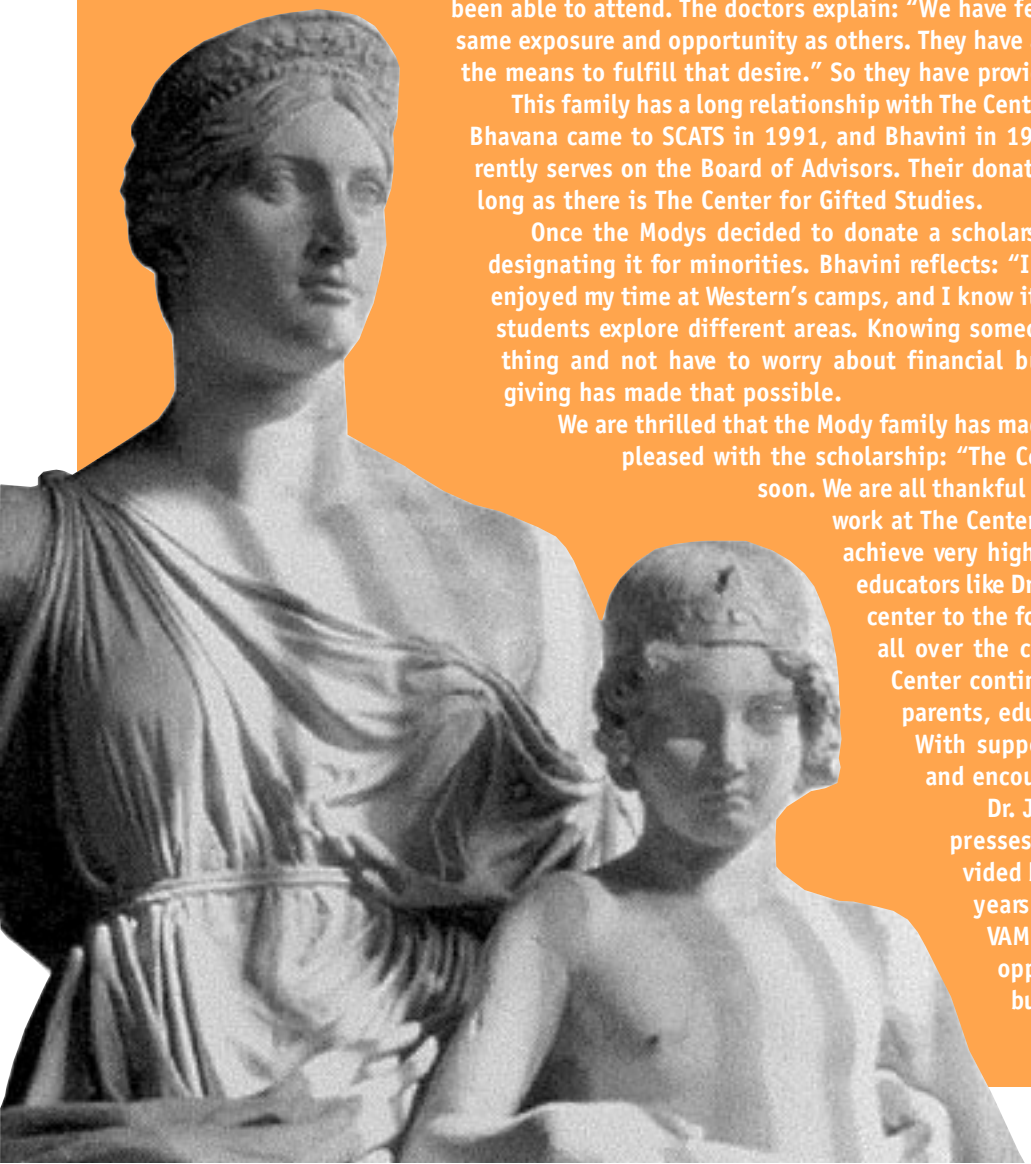
Doctors Bharat and Bharati Mody of Glasgow, KY, have endowed a full tuition needs-based scholarship for minorities to attend VAMPY. Their generous donation will ensure that a high ability young person will benefit from the VAMPY experience who otherwise would not have been able to attend. The doctors explain: "We have felt that minority students do not get the same exposure and opportunity as others. They have a desire and a will but often do not have the means to fulfill that desire." So they have provided the means.

This family has a long relationship with The Center. Both Mody daughters attended camps: Bhavana came to SCATS in 1991, and Bhavini in 1993 and 1994. And Dr. Bharat Mody currently serves on the Board of Advisors. Their donation perpetuates this involvement for as long as there is The Center for Gifted Studies.

Once the Modys decided to donate a scholarship, the children were instrumental in designating it for minorities. Bhavini reflects: "I am really glad about the scholarship. I enjoyed my time at Western's camps, and I know it's a really good program to help younger students explore different areas. Knowing someone will be able to participate in something and not have to worry about financial burdens is a comforting thought." Their giving has made that possible.

We are thrilled that the Mody family has made this commitment. The Modys, too, are pleased with the scholarship: "The Center will be celebrating their 20th year soon. We are all thankful to the people whose dedication and hard work at The Center make it possible for gifted students to achieve very high goals in education. We are grateful to educators like Dr. Julia Roberts whose vision brought this center to the forefront of education for gifted students all over the country and overseas. We hope that The Center continues to have the support from students, parents, educators and politicians that it deserves." With support such as the Modys', we shall thrive and encourage others to as well.

Dr. Julia Roberts, Director of The Center, expresses this sentiment: "The endowment provided by the Doctors Mody will change lives for years to come by providing scholarships to VAMPY. I want to thank them for providing opportunities for young people and helping build a bright future for The Center."



LETTER FROM

Julia Roberts

DEAR FRIENDS OF THE CENTER,

In January, 2001, the National Commission on the High School Senior Year released the preliminary report entitled *The Lost Opportunity of Senior Year: Finding a Better Way*. If you would like to read this preliminary report and later the full report that is to be released in June, you can access the report at www.commissionontheseniorryear.org . One of five national public hearings on this report was held at Western Kentucky University on March 27. Governor Paul Patton who chaired this commission was here to open the hearing. I had the opportunity to address the assembled group, and the following are a few of my remarks.

There are seniors who do have challenging courses and an array of learning opportunities in their high schools, and for them the senior year is not a "lost" opportunity. However, for many seniors that is not the case. Three scenarios create senior years that are less than we would want them to be: (1) Some high schools have few if any rigorous courses for seniors to take; (2) Seniors have rigorous courses but they don't choose to take them, creating a lost opportunity; (3) Seniors have challenging courses to take; however, they are not prepared to take them. All three scenarios are inexcusable, and each results in "lost opportunity."

As parents and educators, we must work to ensure that quality learning opportunities are available in our high schools. We must remove barriers to students making continuous progress. Districts create barriers by specifying the number of semesters the student must be in high school in order to graduate even if rigorous course offerings are not available. Schools create barriers when students are not allowed to take high school classes even though they have demonstrated their readiness to do so. We must encourage schools to offer College Board Advanced Placement courses and then teach the courses at a level that will allow the students to do well on the AP exam. After all, the exam is the accountability, and doing well on the exam earns college credit.

Stay tuned for information on the celebration of twenty years of services offered by The Center for Gifted Studies!

Sincerely,

Julia Roberts

Julia Roberts
Director

The Mission for The Center

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

The Vision for The Center

Becoming an internationally 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 challenge
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TRACY INMAN
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MARCUS DUKES

students

Ten Years of Super Saturdays: "Fun way to learn new stuff"

Those were the words of the four-year veteran of Super Saturdays and one-year veteran of SCATS **Rachel Keyser** of Bowling Green, KY. This twelve-year-old remembered specific activities from these Saturday enrichment classes she took five years ago! "I remember in Biology we made these habitats with coke bottles and mud and pond water. We added all sorts of things to make things grow. And when we opened it up, it stunk because of the egg shells we put in there!" she reflects. "And in third grade I took a math class. We made faces with parts of apples as we studied fractions. Then we put raisins on with peanut butter. It was such a fun way to learn new stuff!" Rachel so enjoyed her Super Saturdays experience that when she finished sixth grade, she attended SCATS: "I couldn't go to Super Saturdays anymore, and this sounded like even more fun. You get to go to *four* classes for *two* weeks! I met a lot of new people. I can't wait to go again this year." Super Saturdays has certainly made a lasting impression on this middle-schooler.

Super Saturdays, an enrichment program for high ability elementary students, came about ten years ago under the leadership of **Mary Evans** who worked at The Center then (now she is principal of Cumberland Trace Elementary School in Bowling Green, KY). She explains, "It was 'born' out of a need expressed by many parents. The parents appreciated the summer program and camp offered by The Center for middle school and high school students and wished for something similar for their younger children." Mary, along with the help of countless others, filled that need.

So the last Saturday of January and the four Saturdays in February are filled with hundreds of young people (this year we hosted 575) on Western's campus attending one of almost forty classes. Mary elaborates on the importance of the location: "We wanted students interested in science to be able to work in real science laboratories. We wanted students interested in Robotics to have the opportunity to work with sophisticated technology. WKU has been so generous with space needs for Super Saturdays!" We have even expanded our classes to South Campus in order to best accommodate needs.

These young people traveled from as far north as Louisville and as far south as below Nashville plus all places in between. The need is immense as Mary attests: "The program grew by leaps and bounds each year, and we always had more children apply than we had spaces for. So we would increase the number of classes for the next year, and the same thing would happen. I think the demand still exceeds what is offered at the primary level." And she is, unfortunately, correct.

PHOTO BY SHERYL HAGAN-BOOTH

"Today I learned an inch, but I want to learn fifteen miles every day."

CHELSEA CORNETT, age 7
Bowling Green, KY

Current Director **Heather Kessler** estimates that The Center had to turn away over 100 children because classes were full: "I am thrilled that we have so many children interested in the program, especially in the early grades. It is unfortunate, however, that so many primary students and this year, preschool students, were unable to attend because classes filled so quickly. In the future, I plan to make a special effort to include more teachers at these grade levels so that we may say yes to the hundred plus students who have been turned away in the past."

But for those students who do attend, the experience is exceptional! Just take a look at what some of our participants have to say:

Leslie Fraim of Scottsville, KY, began her relationship with The Center in the third grade – she's in seventh now. She explains why she kept coming back: "I love the projects the teachers did, and I love learning new and different things each year." In fact she feels that the classes improved her grades in school. And her favorite class? Weather and You where she learned so much about science.

Sam Clemmons from Portland, TN, learned more than he bargained for in this Electrical Engineering class: he learned that women are engineers! "I didn't really expect many women to go into the field," he reasoned. "You always

hear about men making the spaceships. I was surprised when I walked in the door and saw a woman teacher! I'm glad women are in it!" In fact, he has decided to make engineering his career. And he's well-suited for this problem-solving field. His favorite part of the class was building the car: "The motors we had didn't work right. We had to figure out how to make them work. It was real hands-on. It was fun!"

Stephen Cassity from Russellville, KY, came to Super Saturdays from 1996 to 2000. The main reason he returned was the people: "I made the best friends I ever made. I've never had as many friends in school as I had in Super Saturdays." Weather and You and Chemistry rank among his favorite classes. He loved the tour of WBKO Television: "I learned all about how they show the weather on a tv screen, how they find out what the weather is in a matter of seconds, and how they help people." But Chemistry even outshone that: "It's the best class I ever had – ever! Now science is my favorite subject."

Andrew Coleman, a sixth grader from Bowling Green, has attended Super Saturdays since his second grade year at St. Joseph's Elementary School. He keeps returning because "it's fun – and I get to do a lot of neat stuff. At home I wouldn't do anything on a Saturday, probably just watch tv. This way I get to learn." His two favorite classes were Clowning and the class he took this year, Aviation: "In Clowning I liked how I got to learn to do tricks. One time we even got to dress up in costumes and be clowns!" And his favorite part of Aviation involved the field trip to the airport: "We got to see all the planes and how they worked. I loved it!"

Super Saturdays has certainly touched many lives. For young people with high ability, enrichment proves a necessity, sometimes even a life line. Here at The Center we do our best to meet those needs.

Director Heather Kessler comments, "Although this year was my fourth year to coordinate the Super Saturdays program, it was my first year to experience Super Saturdays as a parent. I have always known that it is an outstanding program for our children, but this year I was able to experience this first hand as my son participated in the preschool class. I was a witness to the excitement of the students, the abundance of hard work put forth by the teachers, and the wealth of learning that was taking place each week. My hope for the future is that we will continue to attract such an enthusiastic group of children with such a love of learning - children who have many activities to compete for their time. I also hope that our program will continue to grow, especially for our youngest students, so that we may welcome more teachers and children into our Super Saturdays tradition!"

PHOTO BY SHERYL HAGAN-BOOTH

Motivation for Academic Performance: MAP 2001 Heading in the Right Direction

Founded in 1980, the Duke Talent Identification Program (TIP) is a nonprofit educational organization. TIP is dedicated to identifying and serving academically talented youth and has traditionally made itself available to high achieving students beginning in seventh grade with the Talent Search Program. Realizing that talents need to be nurtured even earlier, TIP began the Motivation for Academic Performance (MAP) program in 1994. MAP takes an already successful program one step further by offering TIP's resources to a broader population of students.

MAP strives to assist with the development and support of talented fourth and fifth graders. Its functions as an informational resource program by supplementing efforts in the participants' homes, schools, and communities. At present, TIP does not sponsor summer or year-round academic opportunities for MAP participants. However, participation in the MAP program does provide information about enrichment opportunities and encouragement for gifted students.

To take part in MAP, students must meet the following criteria:

- attend school in TIP's 16-state Talent Search region (AL, AR, FL, GA, IA, KS, KY, LA, MO, MS, NC, NE, OK, SC, TN, TX)
- be in the 4th or 5th grade when applying (A 5th grader who signed up in 4th grade does not need to apply again)
- scored at the 90th percentile or above on the national norms of a standardized achievement, aptitude, or mental ability test (Tests of this type are already a regular part of most students' elementary school experience.)

Students who qualify and choose to sign up with MAP will receive a number of exciting benefits:

- A certificate of achievement is mailed to all participants in recognition of their academic achievement;
- *The Navigator* newsletter features articles and activities that MAP hopes will help students develop new interests, learn about new opportunities, and enjoy academic success. Participants receive the newsletter twice a year through sixth grade;
- *MAP Guide to Academic Programs*, a resource book, lists a variety of summer and year-round educational programs geared toward elementary and middle school students. These programs are located across the United

CONTEST!

HOST:	The Center for Gifted Studies, Western Kentucky University
PURPOSE:	Advocacy for gifted children (The goal is to increase awareness of the needs of gifted children and youth who are gifted and talented.)
AUDIENCE:	Local, state, and national population
PARTICIPANTS:	Students in grades 4-6, middle school and high school (private, public, or home school)
PRIZES:	Savings Bonds for individual winners and cash awards for teams
DEADLINE:	November 1, 2001
ENTRY FORM:	Entries must be accompanied by an official entry form and signed consent form. Requests can be made to The Center or download a form from the web (www.wku.edu/gifted under What's New)

1 PRODUCT OPTION ONE:
A Television Public Service Announcement (PSA) in Video Form
Length: Thirty seconds or less

2 PRODUCT OPTION TWO:
A Radio PSA in Cassette or CD Form
Length: Thirty seconds or less

3 PRODUCT OPTION THREE:
A Slogan
Length: Twenty words or fewer

States. Students receive their copy of this publication in the first year of their participation;

- *The Student Counseling Guide* provides parents (and students) with information on a variety of topics pertinent to the education of high ability students, as well as resource suggestions;
- MAP students can choose to learn more about their talents by taking the out-of-level EXPLORE test, developed for eighth graders by American College Testing. There is a fee involved.

If you would like more information regarding MAP or TIP, contact Duke University Talent Identification Program, Box 90781, Durham, NC, 27708-0781. Their web address is www.tip.duke.edu .

I've Taken All the AP My School Offers – Now What?

Maybe you're one of the lucky ones whose high school offers a dozen Advanced Placement courses designed to challenge and stimulate – and earn college credit (with qualifying scores on the exam). Maybe your middle school faithfully provides Algebra 1 as an option for their students. But chances are these aren't realistic scenerios. Many schools simply can't offer a wide variety of upper level courses in the traditional sense. That leaves many gifted and talented students without options. Or does it?

So what do you do when you've taken every AP course or when you want higher level mathematics? The internet has some answers. Colleges and universities have some answers. Technology and innovative thinking have provided opportunities where there once were none.

Option One: Independent Study

As a service option for children identified as gifted and talented, an independent study is often stimulating and appropriate. This option proves highly appropriate for students in schools with limited AP offerings. *A Secondary School Guide to the Advanced Placement Program* (1996) put out by The College Board suggests the following: "A combination of independent study and tutorials (individual and small group) has proven successful for some students. Motivation, which is important for all AP students, is especially critical here. Experience with independent study/tutorials suggests that about 90 minutes of tutorial time per week is typically required. Administrators should be aware that, to be effective, tutorials must be carefully planned and structured, and teachers need time to evaluate students' written or taped work. If a regular faculty member cannot be assigned, a professional person from the community can sometimes act as a tutor. When high schools are close to one another, it may be possible to bring together students from several schools for tutoring." With motivation and the right facilitation, students can succeed in these independent AP classes – or other independent studies.

One success story is **Danny Sheffield** of Highland Heights, KY. Danny took every AP class offered at his high school in northern Kentucky (eight classes), but he had additional interests and wanted to pursue those interests through AP courses. So he completed five independent AP studies. He explains, "Basically when taking a course on my own, I merely bought a textbook and the AP study guide, read them, and took the AP test. The school had no involvement in the study." Now much self-discipline and motivation work into the equation for successful independent study. His mother, Dr. Linda Sheffield, concurs: "As a parent, I would say that this really needs to be the student's choice. I think it was great for him to do it. Basically he just did things that he would have done anyway, but this way there was some validation of what he had done. I also think it probably helped in his getting into Harvard." She also mentioned his early age in taking AP tests – fifteen: "It was a good head start on some higher level work. Hopefully that will pay off in learning to study for Harvard classes." Danny's experience earned him a sophomore standing at Harvard and saved his family $36,000 (a year's tuition!). He reflects on the experiences: "It

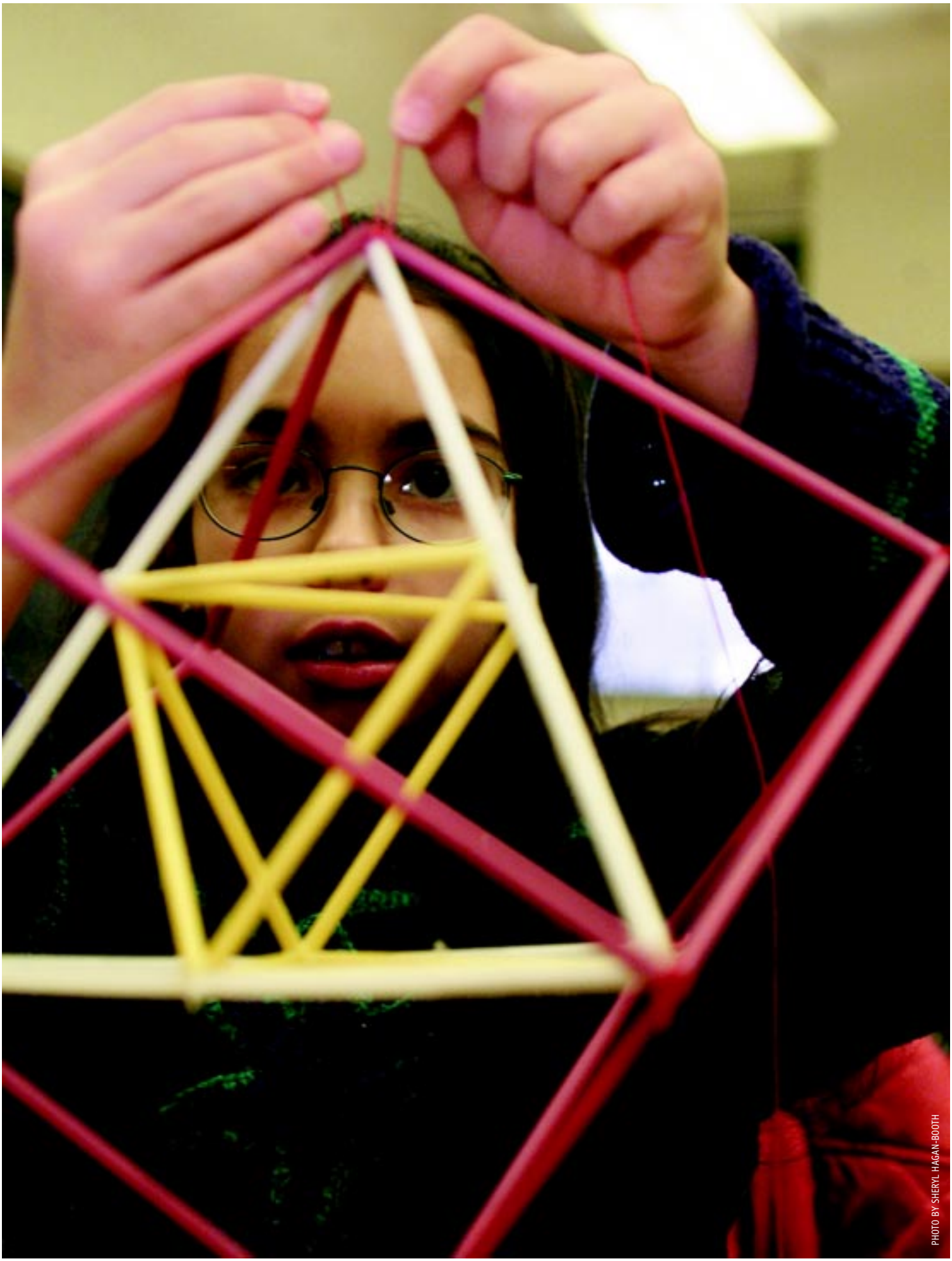

PHOTO BY SHERYL HAGAN-BOOTH

has shown me that even when opportunities are seemingly not present, it is always possible to take matters into your own hands."

Danny took advantage of AP by independent study; almost any course in almost any subject can be handled in a similar way.

Option Two: Distance Learning Through Virtual High Schools

Virtual High Schools have sprung up across the nation offering enrichment and possibility. The online course environment allows customization of courses to meet the needs of students. The Kentucky Virtual High School (KVHS), for example, does just that. Students may take online classes during their regular school day. **Terri DeYong** of KVHS commented on the myriad of options now available for students. These options include eleven AP courses with three more planned for the fall, advanced level writing classes, enrichment in the sciences and even high level math: "We also have a group of gifted middle school students who needed a challenge in math, so they are taking Algebra I for high school credit. The online environment gave them easy access to a Kentucky high school certified teacher. Obviously, there needs to be communication between the middle school and the high school when it comes to awarding credit since it is awarded by the local school, not KVHS." Virtual high schools certainly open the door to enrichment and advanced study. But realize that cost is involved. In Kentucky, for example, an AP course costs $300 for one student. This year the Kentucky Department of Education received a federal grant that will award 100 scholarships for AP courses over the next two years. This certainly is a benefit for those 100 students, but many districts could find the expense difficult. (The KVHS web address is www.kvhs.org .)

Option Three: Distance Learning Through Internet and Correspondence Courses

With the advent of the internet, almost anything is possible. That includes high ability students taking advanced classes electronically – including AP. Several reputable sources exist, explains parent **Darlene Eisenstein** of Glasgow, KY. But timing is of utmost importance. She argues: "You must work it so that the child does the class on school time. This class should be incorporated into his or her regular school schedule. Parents in rural areas especially need to realize their options. Don't expect the schools to do it for you." She even suggests arranging for a group of kids to do it together and have a teacher on staff willing to answer questions or facilitate. Her children have taken several correspondence/internet classes with much success – but there are certainly ways (her suggestions above) to make it a better experience.

Her son Jeffrey, now at the University of Pennsylvania, took several courses through Northwestern (Letterlinks at The Center for Talent Development www.ctd.northwestern/edu/programs .) In eighth grade he took a literary analysis class where he was able to communicate with his instructors by telephone and email. It was so successful that he took an AP Economics course as a 10th grader. This, too, was successful; he earned college credit with his exam score (in spite of having to do it on his own time!). His mother cautions, though, to be sure to work with the AP Coordinator at the school in ordering the exam and arranging a proctor. Jeffrey's sister, Marcia, worked through the University of Missouri – Columbia High School: A Distant Education Institution for a correspondence course. This was done outside of class time, so it proved challenging to manage given her school work load. Another reputable resource for internet courses according to Darlene is The Education Program for Gifted Youth (EPGY) at Stanford University. According to their web site, "EPGY courses use a combination of CD ROM and Internet technologies to provide gifted students with a multifaceted, highly individualized learning environment" www.epgy.stanford.edu .) She has had experience with all three and found them all worthy. In fact, she exclaims, "I am sold on this!"

Another resource to explore is Johns Hopkins Center for Talent Development (CTY). CTY offers AP through correspondence courses. Local universities are yet another possibility for correspondence courses. For example, Western Kentucky University does not require university admission for correspondence courses. Other universities may well have similar policies. This could be a viable avenue for challenging classes.

Option Four: Distance Learning

As technology advances, choices multiply. The College Board's *A Secondary Guide to the Advanced Placement Program* (1996) cites distance learning as a worthy option for areas without AP: "A variation of distance learning is the use of videotaped or live television courses with a consulting and mentoring function carried out through a university. One of several examples of such programs is sponsored by Oklahoma State University. High schools in the Southwest can subscribe to the university's courses and receive the telecasts, with opportunities for interaction with instructors and evaluation of students by university faculty. These resources, however, should be supplemented by substantial input from local teachers." Check local and state universities for possibilities in your area.

Option Five: Concurrent College Enrollment and Dual Credit

Yet another option involves local colleges. Many colleges offer credit for those still in high school. For example, Western Kentucky University allows high ability high school students to take up to three hours per semester. They may take even more hours during the summer. Of course, the high school must be in close proximity to the college in order for this to work. Some offer college classes in the high school. Bowling Green Community College of Western Kentucky University is one such college. Their College on Site Program involves college instructors teaching a wide range of classes at the high school as part of the students' regular schedule. These students receive college credit; high school credit varies with the school's policy. Please keep in mind that these credits, although readily accepted at the sponsoring institution, may not be welcomed nationwide. AP exam credit, however, is recognized nationally.

So what are the alternatives when you've exhausted your school's resources for challenging classes? Take your pick. With a little research, a lot of motivation – and the right funds, anything is possible.

alumni

CAMILLE NAPIER (SCATS 1986) graduated from Rhodes College (Memphis, TN) with a degree in English Literature. After a stint in the Army as a hospital administrator, she taught English as a Second Language in a community school in Washington, DC, and then graduated from Harvard University with her Master's in Education. Today she is a high school English teacher (her "dream job" since 1st grade). She currently lives in Boston but will move to rural New York state in the summer of 2001. Her hobbies are reading, cooking, and hanging out with her three brilliant and charming cats.

JOE NAPIER (SCATS 1984) served a five-year military obligation in the Army after graduating from West Point. After resigning his commission as a Captain in the Signal Corps, he worked for Ryder Integrated Logistics in Knoxville, TN. He and his wife Charlotte, a real estate agent, returned to Bowling Green, KY, in 1998. Since that time he has served as the Quality Manager for Trace Die Cast. His company will be sending him away for his master's degree next year. Joe stays very busy playing with his two children (Emma, age 6, and Harris, age 3), camping, and running (he ran the Disney World Marathon in January).

JULIE GLEIM LYONS (SCATS 1990, 1991, and 1992; Travel to France, 1995) graduated from Transylvania University in May of 2000 with a double major in Mathematics and Computer Science. She attended Transylvania as a William T. Young Scholar. She married Robert Lyons this past September and now resides in Lexington, KY, where she works as a Software Engineer for Lexmark International, Inc.

MIKE LARSON (VAMPY 1989, 1990, 1991, and 1992) graduated from Boston University with a B.S. in Journalism and a B.A. in English in May of 1998. He and his wife, Stacey, currently live in Florida where he is a reporter/staff writer at Bankrate.com covering lending, consumer real estate rates, and interest rate trends. His passion for this line of works stems from an internship at Bloomberg News in Boston; here he realized the satisfaction in helping readers understand complicated financial matters.

ERIC OLSON (VAMPY 1987) is currently a law clerk for U.S. District Judge John G. Heyburn II in Louisville. He and his wife, Emily, celebrated their marriage in Morehead this past summer. He recently graduated from the University of Michigan Law School and will clerk next year for Chief Judge Harry T. Edwards of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit in Washington D.C. He spends his weekends traveling to the University of Iowa where Emily is completing her first year of medical school.

BHAVANA MODY (SCATS 1991) graduated from the College of Wooster in Ohio with a degree in Cultural Anthropology. She is currently employed at Community Educational Services located in San Francisco, CA. She plans to continue pursuing a career within the non-profit sector, focusing on social and environmental justice. In addition to a strong interest in organic farming, she also loves canoeing, biking, hiking, salsa dancing, and cooking.

MICHELLE STIFF (SCATS 1992) graduated with honors in May of 2001 from the University of Louisville with a B.S. in Business Administration in Accountancy. This president of Beta Alpha Psi, an honorary accounting fraternity, will begin her Master's of Accountancy this fall. She works with KPMG, LLP (A Big 5 National Accounting Firm) in Louisville as a staff member in the Assurance/Audit Department. She is a native of Breckingridge County, KY.

"I'm glad to see that middle and high schoolers are still enjoying VAMPY just as I did a decade ago. I'll never forget the friends I made there and the self-confidence the camp instilled in me. In fact, I still go through my old photo albums every once in a while and think back to how much fun I had! Best of luck to all of you and have a wonderful 2001!"

MIKE LARSON, Jupiter, FL

"The best part of the camp for me, and where I really learned a lot, was the experience of making the friends I did. It was an amazing experience at that age to be away from home for three weeks, in an environment similar to college, and making friends from all around the country. We knew we were only there for three weeks, so we made the most of it and had a blast! Even though I don't keep in touch with my VAMPY friends as much as I wish I did, I still remember them all very well and very fondly. I really feel like VAMPY changed my life and helped me to mature and understand a lot more about friendships and being away from home at a relatively young age. It was a truly priceless experience from that perspective! I loved every minute of it and hated when it was time to go home!"

LORI LEFEVRE, Newburyport, MA

update

"Most of all, my experience in SCATS reinforced that learning was FUN and that I wasn't the only one who thought so. Non-traditional classes helped me learn about myself and what I was looking for in my education. I like learning for its own sake. My travel with The Center to France made me more globally conscious. It helped me realize that all cultures are different, and that no one culture is 'right.' It made me want to learn about different cultures and beliefs, both on an international level and simply the local level around me."

JULIA GLEIM LYONS, Lexington, KY

"More than anything, VAMPY introduced me to some extraordinary people, a few of whom still top my 'Favorite Humans' list. The amazing thing that the program does is take teenagers whose brains are rated for exceptionally high speeds, and help them stop whirling around in their own heads long enough to empathize with others. The end result is that they realize that being slapped with the G-word (gifted) is not the worst problem in the world - and naturally introverted folks like myself learn to branch a little. My own VAMPY experiences, though they covered only a few weeks of my life, are still touchstone moments for me when I reflect upon the journey of the past eight years that has taken me from being a shy 13 year old camper to 21 year old college graduate who barely remembers what it's like to be 'the quiet one' in any group."

ALLISON ELLIOTT, Liberty, KY

JOHN NAPIER (SCATS 1984) is currently working on his MBA at the University of Tennessee. His wife, Jenny, teaches high school English in Knoxville. After high school, John served in the Army as a Specialist in a mechanized infantry outfit in Germany for two years. He then returned to earn a B.S. degree in both Chemistry and in Environmental Science from Western. From there he worked for Johnson Electric as the Environmental, Health, and Safety Manager for two years.

ALLISON ELLIOTT (VAMPY 1993, 1994, and 1995; counselor 1998; Travel to London, 1996) graduated in June from Centre College with a degree in history. She interned with Preston-Osborne Public Relations this past semester, and spent fall term 2000 helping to coordinate the vice presidential debate. Allison studied in London, England, during fall term 1999. This summer she will work with the Kentucky Governor's Scholars program for a third time. She plans to pursue a Master's in Mass Communication and is considering a career specialization in public relations for non-profit educational foundations and historic trusts/ preservation groups.

BHAVINI MODY (SCATS 1993 and 1994) is currently studying anthropology, sociology, and education at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. She spends her free time hiking, enjoying the outdoors, painting, and creating pottery. Another passion of hers is working with children: from camp counselor to swimming instructor to tutor, she throughly enjoys helping children.

MICHAEL LAMAR (VAMPY 1991; Travel to London, 1992, and to Europe, 1994) attended Washington University in St. Louis on the Arthur Halley Compton Fellowship for achievement in mathematics and physics. He earned a B.S. in Physics and a B.A. in Economics and Mathematics; he graduated Magna Cum Laude in May, 1999. Continuing his studies at Washington University, he completed a Master's of Science in Mechanical Engineering in August of 2000. During his final year as a graduate student, he coached the Ultimate Frisbee team. Since October 2000, he has worked as a professional researcher at The Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Lab where he is currently working on accurately simulating radar propagation over rough surfaces, EM pulse propagation through buildings, and quantum information technology.

LORI LEFEVRE (VAMPY 1986, 1987, 1988, and 1989) earned a double major in Marine Science and Biology at the University of Miami. From there she attended graduate school at the Duke University School of the Environment where she received a Master's degree in Coastal Environmental Management. With a thesis written about New England groundfish management, she soon found herself in Massachusetts. She currently is a fishery analyst for the New England Fishery Management Council where she writes and develops analyses for federal fishery management regulations in New England (the crux of her thesis). Her future plans possibly involve returning to school for a Ph.D. but most definitely involve getting married this July!

JENNY RONE (VAMPY 1991 and 1992) has just joined the staff for Campus Crusade for Christ. She'll be working with the Campus Ministry at Middle Tennessee State University and is currently raising her financial support team for her ministry. Graduating from Western Kentucky University in May of 2000, she earned a B.A. in Graphic Design and Religious Studies. This Bowling Green native became a Christian while at college and has devoted her life to service.

Meet The Center's Associate Director: Tracy Inman

BY JULIA ROBERTS

Tracy Inman is the new Associate Director for The Center for Gifted Studies, but she is not new to The Center. As the Associate Director, Tracy focuses her time and energy on aggressive advocacy for gifted children. She is responsible for public relations, grant writing, communications, and development. If there is an opportunity to talk to a group about gifted children and their needs as well as about The Center for Gifted Studies and the services it offers, Tracy is ready to say yes that she will be there. Her new position is multi-faceted, and her work is very important to The Center.

Tracy brings a strong background to the new position. She graduated from Western Kentucky University in 1986 with a 4.0 grade point average. She was valedictorian, Ogden Scholar, and Scholar of Potter College. In 1992 she earned the Master of Arts in Education Degree with a major in English. Once again she had a 4.0 in the coursework. In 1992 Tracy was a semi-finalist for Kentucky Teacher of the Year. She has been a mentor for the Governor's Scholars Program and for the Governor's School for the Arts. Her talents are many and varied.

Teaching in VAMPY was Tracy's first time to be a part of activities of The Center. Dr. Richard Weigel suggested to Julia Roberts that Tracy would be a terrific teacher for the VAMPY humanities course. Tracy was an award-winning teacher of AP English at the time. She was teaching at Greenwood High School, but had previously taught at Warren Central High School. When she was presented with the opportunity, she said yes. Later she remarked that teaching in VAMPY was one of the most remarkable experiences in her life. It let her see what was possible when you have capable students who are interested in the topic and you have the books and materials you need as well as the chance to take field trips. Tracy taught mythology another summer and then took time off with little boys. John and Tracy have two boys. Jake is now eight years old, and Zach is six. Tracy came back to teach the humanities course in 1995.

Super Saturdays provided the next occasion for Tracy to be involved with activities offered by The Center. For the past five winter sessions of Super Saturdays, she has taught the Medieval World to third, fourth, fifth, and sixth graders. Most of her teaching experience was with secondary students so teaching younger students was fun for her, and she enjoyed the intensity, the energy, and the sweetness. She found them to be much less inhibited than older students.

The next connection for Tracy with The Center was accepting the offer to be editor of *The Challenge*. The newsletter was a brand new venture. Tracy said that it was an incredible opportunity. She was given a lot of latitude, and she could write what she wanted. She said it was only when she was working with *The Challenge* that she realized all that The Center was doing. She was amazed at the scope as well as the depth of The Center's activities and involvement in various aspects of education. The editorship became a personal challenge. Could she do what she had taught young people to do? Of course, she could and, in combination with the design work of Marcus Dukes, *The Challenge* became an award-winning publication. Tracy keeps the webpage for The Center up to date so she is the one to contact if you have suggestions. In 2000, Tracy traveled with the group who went to London during spring break. She says that each opportunity helps her grow as a writer, a teacher, and a person.

As Associate Director of The Center, Tracy says there are limitless possibilities. In this environment, challenge becomes a very positive word. There are opportunities to identify needs and to address the needs by providing services. She is passionate as an advocate for children who are gifted and talented. She sees the Advisory Board for The Center as a group that will help us reach the vision of The Center. Tracy wants to see The Center as a part of Western as long as there is a university; in other words, her goal is to help The Center continue as an integral component of the institution.

If you have ideas about how we can get the word out about The Center and what it does, please give Tracy a call at 270/745-2742 or e-mail her at tracy.inman@wku.edu. If you know an individual, a corporation, or a foundation with shared goals with The Center and might want to partner in a project, she will be delighted to know about the possibilities. If you would like to discuss any possibilities about The Center and the services it offers, get in touch with Tracy.

teachers

Serving Others Hooks Gifted Students on Learning

— by Barbara A. Lewis

Jason stood atop his desk and shouted, "This math is boring! I don't have to do it!" At that time, the 6th grader's math grade hovered in the *D* range, and he hated doing his homework. Shortly thereafter, Jason was identified as gifted, and placed in my program for academically talented students at Jackson Elementary in Salt Lake City.

The changes in Jason's behavior and grades were almost immediate. Our classwide effort to clean up a hazardous waste site three blocks from school captured his interest (Lewis 1991). Before long, Jason was spearheading a neighborhood effort to get a traffic light installed near his trailer court. He also began volunteering at a nearby children's hospital. From a *D*, Jason's math grade shot up to an *A*.

Six years later, Jason graduated with a 3.5 GPA and earned a scholarship to college. He plans to attend medical school. Service was the hook that caught Jason, an at-risk gifted student, before he fell through the educational cracks.

Why Service Learning?

Service, when connected to learning, benefits students of all academic abilities. For gifted students, service can also provide a specialized and challenging curriculum. Jean Piaget and other reformers stressed teaching thinking and learning as an interaction with the environment. In recent years, service has been an element of virtually every educational reform movement.

Problem Based Learning and the Future Problem Solving Program are just two examples of programs that invite service. Constance Shannon, Harry Passow, Jeffrey Kahn, and Joseph Renzulli have all encouraged service for gifted learners. Annemarie Roeper has stressed the need for gifted kids to seek solutions to community and global problems... (1995).

The Federal Government endorsed service learning with the National and Community Service Act (1990), providing millions of dollars in funding each ensuing year. Since then, every state has applied for funding and scrambled to integrate service into their schools.

As a teacher of gifted students and a national consultant of service and social action, I've often seen service learning provide an extended or differentiated curriculum (Van Tassel-Baska 1993) for the gifted. Service is an experience that interests and challenges them, encourages critical thinking, and stimulates them to contribute in areas of passionate interest to them. Here are some reasons why:

"Gifted children have the potential for greater and more profound social, moral, and ethical concerns. We need to nurture this potential. We talk of the gifted exercising future leadership but seldom design educational programs that will help them develop the skills, the motivation, and the value of leadership."

Harry Passow (d. 1996),
Jacob H. Schiff Professor Emeritus at Teachers College, Columbia University

"Service is a need of the gifted. I have found tremendous moral sensitivity in the gifted population, a desire to help others and a desire for their lives to be meaningful. When gifted children find their paths of service, they experience a deep sense of fulfillment, as if there is some reason that they are here."

Linda Silverman,
Gifted Development Center, Denver, CO

Service Learning addresses the specialized needs of gifted students.

These kids need opportunities "to work independently, at a faster pace, (with) in-depth content, to interact with adult professionals or mentors, and to learn to research and to apply a variety of problem-solving strategies" (Sorenson and Francis 1988). These needs can place the gifted at high risk in mainstream classrooms.

One way to address these needs is with appropriate service activities. Opportunities to help others, however, should blend with programs and strategies for the gifted, not replace them....

Service is an authentic learning experience that can extend to the community.

"For many years," says Renzulli, "educators have been looking for the 'missing ingredient' that will help to form a bridge between what is learned in classrooms and the ways in which learning is pursued in the wider world of work. Service learning provides a vehicle for the application of basic academic skills, higher level thinking processes, and strategies for working cooperatively with others...."

Service offers an exciting curriculum that provides gifted students with the motivation to participate in classroom activities.

Because service experiences are basically open-ended, no one knows ahead what might happen. Gifted students usually thrive on projects that have no preplanned answers....

When students share their gifts through service to others, an increase in self-esteem, leadership, and a sense of mission results.

As students internalize the service process, they learn to better manage their own lives and to find joy in helping others. "It is not enough that young people like themselves," says Beane (1991). "They must also have a sense that what they say and think and do counts for something...."

A Baker's Dozen of Design Ideas

1. *Use the principles of good service* (Alliance for Service Learning in Educational Reform 1992). For example, involve students in brainstorming, planning, and implementing the service activity. Real learning experiences encourage gifted students to explore areas of intense interest and to demonstrate leadership....
2. *Make service a requirement*. For example you might incorporate it into IEPs for gifted students, if student problem solving and choice are allowed....
3. *Never use gifted students to solve a teacher's pet problem or cause, or assign them a project....*
4. *Encourage service experiences that extend from real needs and allow students to contribute....*
5. *Offer service classes....*
6. *Design interdisciplinary service courses....*
7. *Offer service experiences that can range from performing direct, simple services to advocating for social change....*
8. *Provide mentorships for gifted students with community members.* Teaming up with experts in the community may help rapid learners explore careers, and to serve their neighbors by solving community problems....
9. *Reduce liability.* By obtaining a district policy covering all students, parents, and volunteers, school districts can reduce liability in transporting kids and in working with others....
10. *Ask students to demonstrate their productive use of time and evidence of learning....*
11. *Recognize students for their services in order to encourage continued commitment....*
12. *Encourage students to reflect on their service experiences....*
13. *Gifted students or the school can research and develop a clearing-house or database of service opportunities that others can draw on.*

Linking Learning with Life

Service connected to learning is not the solution to all problems in education for the gifted, but it can be the connecting point for a differentiated curriculum – one that enhances critical thinking skills, sharpens problem-solving abilities, and develops talents. At the same time, service provides opportunities for other students in a classroom to join in at different levels of ability and interest.

Learning linked with real life provides opportunities for gifted students to share their gifts and, in the process, gain the confidence to shape the future. For many of them, service is the singular experience that changes their educational direction. For example, when an empowered Jason organized his neighbors to work for a traffic light, he also grew interested in improving his grades and in volunteering at the hospital. As Jason put it, "Getting recognized as *being* intelligent in our service project gave me the chance to *act* intelligently. It was the first time I felt appreciated for having brains."

NEW E-MAIL ADDRESS

In our effort to help you, we have simplified our e-mail address. Our new address omits the word *studies* to make it shorter and easier to remember: gifted@wku.edu. Our old address is no longer valid.

ON THE WEB

Visit The Center for Gifted Studies' web site at http://www.wku.edu/gifted. Please let us know what you want to see that you aren't seeing. After all, the site is to serve your needs.

The Center for Gifted Studies Announces Board of Advisors

The Center for Gifted Studies is thrilled to introduce our inaugural Board of Advisors. These fine men and women are donating their talents, expertise, and time to help The Center reach our vision. Most of them have had children in our programs and wholeheartedly invest in our mission; the rest share our passion and vision.

On March 9, 2001, Advisory Board members came from all over the state (including one from Indianapolis!) to share ideas and plan for the future. Agenda topics included Ideas for Celebrating the First Twenty Years as The Center for Gifted Studies; Ideas for Getting the Information Out on The Center and Its Programs; Ideas for Gaining Financial Support; and Next Steps. The Advisory Board plans to meet once a quarter (at their suggestion) to continue its work. With so many people willingly dedicated to our cause, The Center's next twenty years (and the next, and the next...) hold unimaginable promise!

THE 2001 BOARD OF ADVISORS

Mrs. Martha Neal Cooke of Louisville, KY
Mr. Ben Cundiff of Cadiz, KY
Mrs. Darlene Eisenstein of Glasgow, KY
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Mr. Charles Zimmerman of Louisville, KY

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Service is Key to Leadership: The Focus of Leadership Institute V

For five years educators, administrators, and counselors have convened at Western Kentucky University to promote leadership in gifted children and youth. This past November 30 and December 1, over sixty people from around the state met at South Campus to learn, discuss, and share ideas. The focus of Leadership V was service to the community and the vital role it plays in leadership development of all students, but especially those who are gifted and talented.

Gifted Resource teacher and author **Barbara Lewis** of Park City, Utah, presented four sessions dealing with various aspects of implementing service for gifted children in the school environment: Gifted Kids Solving Problems Instead of Being Problems, Gifted Kids Solving Real Community Problems, Youth Reducing Crime and Violence Through Problem-Based Character Development; and What Do You Stand For? In these sessions she provided research, differentiated the types of service, explained why and how to implement service, and shared a wealth of ideas for service. (Please see her article: "Serving Others Hooks Gifted Students on Learning.") Many left the Institute with immediate plans to incorporate service to community as a service option for children identified as gifted in leadership.

One participant, however, has already implemented service with her gifted students. **Pam Wilson** of Russell County Schools showcased their project in the Make A Difference Day created by USA Weekend magazine. (New this year to the Institute was a Showcase of Leadership Activities wherein participants displayed successful leadership projects that they had implemented.) Pam's display highlighted her students making a difference in a local nursing home: "They felt that senior members of our community may sometimes be neglected in that they don't receive enough attention, company or help." So, students organized a day to visit and entertain the residents of Fair Oaks. They made small gifts of origami boxes filled with surprises and tissue flowers. Students read poetry and short stories, sang, and visited with the residents. In fact, these 6th, 7th, and 8th grade gifted and talented students won the $500 prize money awarded locally for the most worthy project! The judges felt that if these students and others became aware of and sensitive to the needs of the elderly, then they would be stronger in facing future obstacles.

Impact of Problem Solving and Service on Youth

Barbara Lewis, Park City, Utah

- increased leadership development
- enhanced self-esteem/ego development
- increased intellectual development
- more complex patterns of thought
- greater mastery of skills and content
- increased social/psychological development
- heightened sense of personal and social responsibility
- more positive attitudes towards adults and others
- more active exploration of careers
- increased moral development
- raised mathematics and reading scores
- reduced drug use (*Phi Delta Kappan*, June, 1991)
- improved attendance (19%) among at-risk kids (Overbrook High School, Philadelphia)
- increased interest (50%) in post-secondary education (Chestnut Ridge High School, Bedford County, PA)
- lowered drop-out numbers
- improved GPA's (70% overall students; 84% at-risk students) (Florida Learn and Serve, statewide)
- significantly improved sense of duty to help others
- significantly improved sense of being able to make a difference (Search Institute, *Source,* January, 1999)

An interesting discussion ensued in Pam's classroom following an article in the local newspaper that covered the various projects in their area. The article did not even mention that these middle-schoolers participated, much less that they won recognition! After much discussion of what to do to correct the omission, one student spoke up and the rest readily agreed: "If we did that (complained about not being mentioned, especially since we won), it would defeat the purpose of the whole day – we did it to 'make a difference' – not to win the money or let anyone know that we were spending our day visiting the residents. We only wanted to spend time with them, let them know we care." Service to others is rewarded intrinsically.

After the presentations by Barbara Lewis, Pam realized things she could do to improve: "I received some great ideas from Barbara Lewis on how to make it a more appropriate learning experience – rather than just a project to be doing." Service to the community can indeed be a very rich and rewarding learning experience for all involved. And when Barbara Lewis's suggestions are followed, the experience can be unparalleled for the gifted and talented identified in leadership.

During the two days, many other strategies and opportunities were presented for those identified in leadership. Dan Reeder of Montgomery County Schools, Julia Roberts of The Center for Gifted Studies, and Donna Leach of

PHOTO BY SHERYL HAGAN-BOOTH

Russellville Independent Schools all contributed to the Institute. And the Showcase of Leadership Programs included displays from LaRue, Russell, and Carroll County. Leadership Institute VI scheduled for November 29-30 should showcase even more replicable projects and provide even more assistance in servicing these young people.

What Educators Need to Know About Student Motivation

Why do many gifted students seem to do just what is necessary to get by, while others enthusiastically embrace new challenges?

Most studies of motivation contrast intrinsic (or internal) motivation with extrinsic (or external) motivation. Intrinsic motivation is at work when students are engaged in something that interests and challenges them. They might enjoy the task so much that they lose track of time. Extrinsic motivation refers to work that is completed in order to gain something other than the pleasure of the task itself; for example, teacher approval, a high grade, or a prize.

Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can lead to high achievement. However, students who are intrinsically motivated are more likely to find learning meaningful, to prefer challenging tasks, to focus on the task rather than how well other students are doing, and to feel satisfied with their performance. Students who are extrinsically motivated are more likely to work their hardest only when there is some incentive present and are more likely to worry about their performance compared to other students.

What can classroom teachers do to increase intrinsic motivation?

Several classroom practices can enhance students' intrinsic motivation. Students need to be offered tasks and projects that are appropriately challenging. This can be accomplished through curriculum compacting, allowing students access to material beyond their designated grade level, and assigning independent research projects. Students also need some voice and choice in what and how they learn. This may mean that the teacher incorporates students' interests into class material, lets students select which of several assigned tasks they wish to do first, and allows students to choose how they present projects. Teachers need to evaluate student work for improvement and mastery, rather than just relative performance. This may mean giving two grades for some work, one for effort and one for performance. It may also be accomplished through portfolio assessment, where students can see clearly whether they are improving over time or whether they are simply collecting easy "A"s. Finally intrinsic motivation may be enhanced in a non-competitive, multidimensional classroom, where all students do not do the same thing at the same time. While some students work with the teacher, others may work in small groups, and still others work independently at learning centers or in the library. When students learn in multidimensional classrooms, they are less likely to compare their performance to that of other students and less likely to be distracted from the task by comparing grades.

An Invitation to a Celebration

You are cordially invited to attend our Homecoming Celebration honoring The Center and all of our friends. Twenty years ago we began servicing the needs of gifted children, their educators, and their parents. You have helped make this possible, and we'd love to welcome you home to be a part of the celebration. Please make plans to join us – and bring along others who've been a part of us!

What: **Old Fashioned Picnic**
Who: **The Center for Gifted Studies and Its Friends**
When: **Saturday, July 7, 2001 at 3:00 p.m.(CDT)**
Where: **Western Kentucky University, South Lawn**

We'll send out more information as the time draws near and plans finalize. Please help us by contacting others with whom we may have lost contact. We want everyone to be there! Check the web site for more information.

We have very special plans underway for the fall as well. It's certainly a time to celebrate!

TOPIC NOTES

Motivation, as seen through student persistence and intense interest in a chosen subject area, plays an important role in understanding what contributes to giftedness.

- **Several classroom practices can affect whether students will be motivated intrinsically. These include offering appropriately challenging tasks and projects, giving students a voice in what and how they learn, evaluating student work for improvement and mastery, and creating multidimensional classrooms.**
- **Students from gifted programs feel more capable than average achieving students to make their own judgments regarding classroom activities.**
- **Placing limited emphasis on competition and norm-referenced evaluation minimizes stigmatization of high achieving students as being "different" and makes it more likely that they will be working at an appropriate level. This de-emphasis also increases the opportunity for successful experiences among the other students.**

This information comes from a pamphlet published by NRC/GT:

P. Clinkenbeard & M. Delcourt (Ed.) (n.d.) What educators need to know about... student motivation (Practitioner's Guide - A9509) Storrs, CT: The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented.

A Place of Quiet Contemplation

A cool morning mist in the not quite light sky reminds me that fall is nearing its end. Walking to breakfast down the wide graveled path, I gather my wool sweater to my chin and stop to be enveloped in the silence. I see acres of trees afire with color, quaint wooden buildings dotting the horizon, and silhouettes of horses in the rolling distance. I relish the cold, the silence, the time for contemplation in this beautiful, serene other-world of Shakertown. The quiet beauty of the surroundings encourages me, so I quicken my pace to join the others.

When the white wooden door of the eating house swings open, everything changes. A certain energy charges the air among the voices and clank of flatware. I meet smiling faces who have so quickly become my comrades, and I dine with eager minds who share the same vision. In between the homemade buttermilk biscuits and country ham, I share contemplations. Suddenly no one is a Ph.D., a lawyer, a city leader; we are all people who care about children. And we've come together to make a difference for them.

People like me have been coming together for ten years now to join in the Symposium On Kentucky's Children Who Are Gifted and Talented. Each year they have gathered at this ideal environment of Shakertown. Sheila Cruse, currently with the Prichard Committee but former Kentucky Association for Gifted Education (KAGE) Executive Director, reflects: "We've impacted so many people who've gone out to be influential in their districts. What you see today has been happening for ten years. Some people have heard and heard about the needs of gifted children. First time people with children haven't heard it, and they need to see it's okay to ask questions." So we ask, and we learn.

Now who is this "we"? Sheila explains, "We bring decision makers together to talk about needs of gifted children and the national perspective. Folks go back into their communities and become advocates, even leaders."

And from whom do we learn? National leaders in gifted education, experienced educators, state educational leaders including Commissioner of Education Gene Wilhoit, and the young people themselves. In fact, the panel of students near the end of the Symposium proves especially powerful. All of the issues discussed in the Symposium are real – the kids themselves have experienced them, and they poignantly tell us their needs and their hopes. Anne Raff, for example, from Frankfort, KY, described with excitement her experience with the Kentucky Virtual High School and the Advanced Placement courses she took. She also quietly told of her isolation and lack of challenge.

It was a combination of all these needs – from cognitive to social-emotional – that helped birth the Symposium. That and The Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) of 1990. Sheila reflects: "KERA was a wonderful thing; we believed in the philosophy. But we were afraid at the same time that the gifted were being left behind. At that time the Governor and his Cabinet sent the message that all kids can learn at high levels. This hurt gifted education because some learn at higher levels. This message didn't get out." So KAGE and The Center for Gifted Studies initiated the Symposium that focused on education and advocacy (see the Goals Box.) Today it is sponsored by The Kentucky Advisory Council for Gifted and Talented Education and KAGE.

Throughout the years, hundreds of decision makers in Kentucky have learned about the special needs of gifted and talented children. Speakers from such fine institutions as The National Research Center for Gifted and Talented at the University of Connecticut, The Advanced Placement Programs Southern Region of The College Board and The Governor's Scholars Program have enlightened the participants. Even business leaders such as Gary Mielcareck of United Parcel Service and Billy Harper of Harper Industries have participated in creating advocacy for the gifted through the Symposium. Education is the key to understanding and ultimately to advocacy.

As I look back over this ten-year history, I think of the others who traveled that same serene graveled path, talked excitedly over the lemon pie, and stayed up late in the Meeting Houses sharing stories and offering support – all for the sake of Kentucky's children. I also think back on Commissioner Wilhoit's words and remember specific urgent messages: "Now is the time to focus our energy on the task of educating on high levels.... We must challenge.... We must identify those who slip through the cracks.... We need to make sure to help children develop life skills to cope – and not isolate them...." And I am revitalized in the mission and the vision.

Goals of the Symposium

- To examine current research and practice on gifted children and their achievement;
- To discuss and recommend appropriate learning opportunities for Kentucky's gifted children in light of national goals and state reform;
- To discuss economic and policy considerations for educating highly able young people in the Commonwealth;
- To develop policy guidelines to ensure optimum development of Kentucky's gifted children.

parents

Parents Learning to Be Leaders: The Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership

As the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence celebrates its 20th year, its program The Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership begins its fifth year of training parents. Chair **Fannie Louise Maddux** explains the vital role the Institute plays in education in Kentucky: "For starters, our Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership, the only program of its kind in the nation, gives parents information and training they can put to work to become strong advocates for their children's education. And study after study has shown that parent involvement in education can make all the difference." Those of us in the gifted arena can attest to that.

Over 700 Kentucky parents have already been trained to work with others in improving education. This year 225 more parents will attend the all-expenses-paid Institute in seven areas around the state. Fannie Louise argues, "Our goal is to form an army of active, knowledgeable volunteers who work for higher achievement and involve others in the task." The results are clear: 20 Institute graduates serve on local school boards and over 100 serve on school councils. "Others are taking notice as well," Fannie Louise continues. "The Institute received the Lauren K. Weinberg Humanitarian Award from the National Conference for Community and Justice in March this year. And Institute director Bev Raimondo received the Martha Layne Collins Leadership Award at the Women's Business Leadership Conference in August." Indeed an impact has been made.

Executive Director **Robert F. Sexton** comments on this impact: "The Prichard Committee's voice is heard regularly in state and local deliberations on policy issues affecting the academic performance of students. And the committee has continued its communication and outreach efforts, reaching thousands of people in Kentucky and beyond with publications and presentations." The parent volunteers and citizens who make up the committee work diligently to improve education.

One way that education improves is through parent projects. Each parent must design and implement a project as part of the Parent Leadership training. Take **Donna Chu** and **Brenda Murphy** of McCracken County for example. As parents of gifted children themselves, they realized a need for parents and students to be better informed about the steps necessary for successful entry into college. They created this highly beneficial and easy-to-follow guide: *Keys to Success: A Guide for College-Bound Students.* From sample letters requesting information from colleges to saving for college, the guide takes both parent and student from eighth grade to senior year. This invaluable source is certainly an asset for all – including the young people who are gifted and talented. "I've had people roll down their windows on the way to school to call out a thank you," explains Donna Chu. Parents need information so that they do not feel intimidated by the whole college application process. In fact, parents need to feel empowered in every area of their child's education. Donna comments that empowerment is key in the Commonwealth Institute: "The information they gave us at the three seminars made me feel so much more power as a parent. I realized that I have a right – really a duty to be there in my child's school." The Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership provides the information, the training, and the support.

Parents who have a strong interest in improving Kentucky schools are encouraged to be a part. If you are one of those people, contact the Prichard Committee for more information about the application process: (800) 288-2111 or www.prichardcommittee.org. Parental advocacy is vital for education of all students – including those who are gifted and talented.

Parents and Professional as Partners

— by Nancy M. Robinson, Ph.D.

As a psychologist who works with families of gifted children, I am witness to a great many battles between home and school that could and should have been avoided. In my view, parents need to give a very high priority to establishing a working partnership with all the other adults — from bus drivers and Little League coaches to teachers and principals — who share their responsibility for children. Whether or not these adults are talented, skilled, and/or sympathetic affects how *hard* the task may be, but not how *essential* it is for parents to become partners with them!

Different Perspectives

There are many reasons that other adults may see your child differently than you do. In a group setting, active, curious, and independent children — or on the contrary, shy and reticent ones — may act differently than they do at home. Teachers these days have too many children to teach and too many problems to deal with, and the spread of ability levels in a given classroom may be overwhelming. Your "angel" may become bored and irritated, clown around, become inattentive, refuse to do work that seems babyish, and even refuse to do work that is more challenging. Your child may feel lonely when surrounded by peers who are not on the same wavelength or, conversely, may all-too-successfully abandon advanced abilities in a desperate attempt to be just like the other school children.

School personnel often operate on a different set of assumptions than parents do. Remember that these people have your child's welfare at heart! They may sincerely believe, for example, that "age is everything," and that it is inevitably socially and emotionally harmful for children to be placed with older students. They may expect gifted children to be perfect and see *any* problem (even short stature) as enough to scuttle accelerative solutions. They may believe that early giftedness is only transient, not a predictor of things to come. And, with today's school reforms, they may mistakenly see both ends of the normal curve as mirror images, concluding that if inclusion is good for slower children it must also be good for the brightest.

Negotiating With Schools

It is all too easy in such a situation to see one's child as a victim of malicious teachers and children, and of an unsympathetic system. At all costs, don't let your child play the "victim role." Rather, be prepared to negotiate and to help your child learn self-advocacy skills as well.

A book by Fisher and Ury (1991) is a valuable resource, written for anyone who is dealing with others in reaching a goal. As Fisher and Ury point out, many people think they must be "hard bargainers" to avoid being "softies." As a consequence, they tend to force others into taking and defending positions rather than agreeing upon a common goal and moving towards that goal.

For example, you and the teacher might agree on the goal of providing an optimal education for your child in a challenging setting in which hard work and excellence are expected and valued. (Don't make the mistake, particularly in a public school, of asking for a *better* education for your child than others — just the most appropriate choice of the possibilities.)

Having asked for a planning conference, be prepared not to do battle but to problem-solve as partners, not adversaries. Do some preparatory brainstorming. If you can come in with several ideas, some probably feasible, some not, it is likely the teacher can add to the list. Once you've come up with several possibilities, some will seem more helpful than others. Especially if one you select constitutes a significant change, such as grade-skipping or going to middle school for a class or two, ask for a trial at least of several weeks, perhaps to Thanksgiving, with an evaluation at that time. To do so is likely to soften the teacher's resistance; after all, you are requesting an experiment, not a life-long commitment. You might offer to help, such as providing an interesting nonfiction book at school for your child to use when assignments are completed, or you could offer to locate, perhaps even purchase for the school, more sophisticated software. You may fill in some gaps at home to help accommodate certain changes. If, for example, your child skips a grade, work on some of the social skills that could help your child make an easier transition. And remember, as the plan proceeds, not only to fine-tune it, but to thank your partner from time to time.

Finally, remember that whatever plans you develop are going to have drawbacks as well as advantages. There is no perfect world for a child who does not fit the norm. Compromise is the name of the game for the effective negotiator.

Reference:

Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In. (Rev.) Fisher, R. & Ury, W. (New York: Viking Penguin, 1991).

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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 (270) 745-6323, by fax (270) 745-6279, or by e-mail at gifted@wku.edu .

Lost Contact

As the years have gone by, we have lost contact with some people important to us. Under Alumni on our web page (www.wku.edu/gifted/), we have a section entitled: Where Are They Now? Check it out. If you can help us reconnect with some of these friends, we sure would appreciate it.

friends of the center

Kathy and John Abbott	Louisville, KY
Brenda Adams	Bowling Green, KY
Sheila McDaniel Apicella	Mt. Sterling, KY
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June 17 - 29, 2001
The Summer Camp for Academically Talented Middle School Students (SCATS), WKU

June 24 - 29, 2001
The Advanced Placement Institute, WKU

July 1 - 21, 2001
The Summer Program for Verbally and Mathematically Precocious Youth (VAMPY), WKU

July 9 - 13, 2001
The English Vertical Team Institute, WKU

July 9 - 13, 2001
The Mathematics Vertical Team Institute, WKU

July 9 - 13, 2001
The Social Studies Vertical Team Institute, WKU

August 25, 2001
Update on Gifted Education Workshop

September, 2001
Junior Great Books Workshop

November 29 - 30, 2001
Leadership VI, WKU South Campus

January 26, February 2, 9, 16, and 23 , 2002
Super Saturdays, WKU Campus

March 29 - April 7, 2002
Spring Break in London

June 1 - 14, 2002
The Italian Experience

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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