“Once you see an ole’ broke-down barn, you need to turn left,” so concluded my directions to Otter Creek Academy, a new program for girls in our KECSAC family. The admonition about the barn had me a bit nervous—exactly where was I going? I’m a city girl, I’m not used to navigating via landmarks—but the accompanying vistas of rolling hills and fallow fields of grain reminded me: I’m in Kentucky, where pristine beauty and remnants of human habitation intermix.

When Superintendent John Dalton brought Peggy Shearer, a 30 year veteran of Kentucky schools and a recent retiree, to head-up the new program, he said: “I want to do here for the girls, what they’ve done for the boys down the road.” He was referring to their sister-program Foothills Academy. With her help, Judge Jeff Choate and Superintendent Dalton, established Otter Creek Academy, a school devoted to educating the whole child as well as providing the best counseling and treatment for the girls in their care.

The campus is surrounded by 48-acres of wildlife and beauty; it is a serene and peaceful place. Otter Creek accepts students from 13-17 years old and

Continued on page 5
I freely admit, I sometimes get lost in the sounds of country music. I can be driving across this great Commonwealth, visiting a State Board of Education member, one of our 100 programs or a community partner, and sometimes I literally get lost in the music. The genre is filled with lyrics about heartbreak, wrong turns, disappointment and the occasional honky-tonking goodtime. It’s an emotional escape from the worries of the world or the hurdles we face in our everyday lives. In short, the problems of others make ours seem so much less problematic. And, honestly, we could probably all use just a little bit of an escape.

A few weeks ago, I was talking with a young girl in a group home who was telling me all about her love of school. How she has been academically excelling in one of our programs and how she was dreaming, for the first time, of her future and college. And when I asked her about what brought her to this place, about her history, she recounted a story filled with violence, rape, neglect, both physical and emotional abuse and of hopelessness. She shared a poem she had written about the abuse she suffered at the hands of her father and his friends and the emotions she felt as her mother silently watched, only speaking once to let her know that “this was for your own good.” She cried. I cried.

On the way home that afternoon, I searched my radio dial for a good country station to distract me from the stories I heard that day but I couldn’t get her out of my mind. Her words, so filled with raw emotion, pain and yet also excitement for what lies ahead, reminded me of the purpose of our work. She reminded me that those of us working daily to provide a quality education and a future filled with possibilities can never slow down, we can’t turn back, and we can’t stop. She and 16,000 other students across this state are counting on us to do the right thing and to challenge them with high expectations, to provide equitable services and to be there in a way that no one else has. She offered a challenge to all of us that day, a challenge that said if she could do all she could to be successful, to overcome every possible obstacle, shouldn’t we? I am so thankful that we have dedicated teachers and administrators in our programs and that we have a State Board and compassionate policy makers who are working to support our children—and I know this student is thankful too.

I found that country station I was looking for that day and oh, how I sometimes get lost in the sounds of country music.

Yours Truly,

Dr. Ronnie Nolan
KECSAC Director

---

**KECSAC Updates**

**Listen to the Children-Voices that Beg to be Heard: Interviews with State Agency Children**

Children in the care and custody of the Commonwealth of Kentucky have unique emotional, physical and educational needs. No one understands this better than the children themselves. Over the next year KECSAC will conduct a research project designed to provide these children an opportunity to voice the successes and barriers they have encountered while receiving educational services at a state agency children’s program.

The interviews will provide background information about state agency children, their adversities, goals and expectations regarding their education. Information gained through this research will be used to inform state policy makers about the intense needs of this population of students and guide future initiatives aimed at improving the educational and treatment services provided to state agency children.

“Voices that Beg to be Heard” is modeled after a project completed by KECSAC in 1996-1997 called “Listen to the Children: Interviews with State Agency Children about their Education.” This report provided insightful personal perspectives about the lives and educational needs of state agency children.
demonstrations, a petting zoo, American Indian Games (including the precursor to Lacrosse), Project Appreciation and, of course, apples (a caramel apple station, apple cider and apple butter production).

Teacher Ed Murray sums up the teaching philosophy behind the Harvest Festival thusly: “There are many opportunities for incorporating hands-on lessons in a variety of different subject areas. Students leave the classroom to see hands-on demonstrations in science, social studies, math and even drama. Activities like the Harvest Festival help to change the negative perception of school that students may have developed over the years. These events provide learning opportunities that are outside the traditional methods of instruction and make learning/school a place where students actively participate in lessons that appeal to a variety of learning styles.”

The expanded Harvest Festival also seeks to integrate another on-going project of Ramey-Estep’s into the festivities—Project Appreciation. Since 2004, Ramey-Estep students have sent over 5,000 care packages to soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. These packages contain many comforts of home and hygiene, but more importantly, they are individualized by the students. Each package is delivered in a decorated bag, often featuring patriotic themes, and a letter from a Ramey-Estep student thanking the soldier for his/her service and wishing them health and safety. The letters often get replies and are held most dear by the soldiers. Two battalions have sent back flags in thanks—one was flown by the 201st Engineering Battalion in Iraq on a mission on Christmas day and the other was flown on three missions by another battalion in Afghanistan. While the students assemble the care packages, Pam Ferguson plays patriotic music and American folk songs on a keyboard and the students are encouraged to sing along.

The petting zoo, which included a llama, a horse, a goat, an alpaca and a few rabbits, was for many of the students the first time they were allowed to hand-feed a farm animal. Learning animal biology takes on a whole new dimension when a horse huffs at you, demanding a second helping of oats.

Ramey-Estep’s Harvest Festival, much like Ramey’s overall philosophy as a school, takes learning beyond the page to lived experience—it helps the students make memories and expands their horizons.
As the 2010-2011 school year got into swing, KECSAC welcomed teachers and administrators from across the state to Richmond, KY for two days of training and motivation. But these weren’t just any teachers and administrators—they are the ones who are embarking on an exciting new journey. This year they have taken on the rewarding challenge of educating at-risk students in state agency children programs!

New Educators’ Training was held on September 1st and 2nd at Perkins Conference Center on the campus of Eastern Kentucky University. Forty-nine teachers and administrators who are beginning their first year in a KECSAC program joined a group of noted speakers and trainers to learn about the unique population of students in their classrooms. While some of these participants have been teaching for many years, state agency children face a number of barriers to their educational success, and KECSAC wants every educator in our programs to have the best resources possible to overcome those barriers. The first day of training opened with Dr. Jane Bluestein delivering an incredible keynote address that spoke directly to the strategies needed to teach in an alternative setting. Dr. Bluestein’s practical advice started the two day conference on just the right note. The rest of day one was devoted to KECSAC specific policies and processes. Attendees learned what would be expected of them as part of the KECSAC team and what reporting and monitoring procedures would be in place.

Day two focused on core content specific strategies in the areas of math, reading and science. Presenters Michelle Ruckdeschel, Mike Parks and Scott Townsend provided hands on examples and activities that could be taken to the classroom the very next day. April Pieper from the Kentucky Department of Education did the group a great service by sharing all of the secondary intervention strategies available from the Department. One teacher noted that she’d been in the field for many years and didn’t know what all KDE had to offer and planned to take advantage of as many of those resources as possible. The training was concluded by Butch Hamm, 2009 Kentucky Teacher of the Year. Butch shared how he uses the principles of customer service in his classroom and encouraged the participants to share a laugh with their students. KECSAC is so excited to welcome this year’s new educators and looks forward to working with all of our partners in the pursuit of a high quality education for all of Kentucky’s students, particularly those most at-risk.

Nearly 130 veteran and student teachers joined KECSAC on October 27 for the first “Critical Issues Series” professional development event of the fall. Nancy Gilligan of Strategy Education presented a full day of training on differentiated instruction to the participants, which consisted of KECSAC teachers and administrators as well as EKU College of Education student teachers. Ms. Gilligan focused on responsive teaching and the need to reach pupils with different learning styles. This topic is particularly important for KECSAC educators who are teaching multiple grade levels in one classroom and whose students are often facing barriers to their educational success, and KECSAC wants every educator in our programs to have the best resources possible to overcome those barriers. The first day of training opened with Dr. Jane Bluestein delivering an incredible keynote address that spoke directly to the strategies needed to teach in an alternative setting. Dr. Bluestein’s practical advice started the two day conference on just the right note. The rest of day one was devoted to KECSAC specific policies and processes. Attendees learned what would be expected of them as part of the KECSAC team and what reporting and monitoring procedures would be in place.

Day two focused on core content specific strategies in the areas of math, reading and science. Presenters Michelle Ruckdeschel, Mike Parks and Scott Townsend provided hands on examples and activities that could be taken to the classroom the very next day. April Pieper from the Kentucky Department of Education did the group a great service by sharing all of the secondary intervention strategies available from the Department. One teacher noted that she’d been in the field for many years and didn’t know what all KDE had to offer and planned to take advantage of as many of those resources as possible. The training was concluded by Butch Hamm, 2009 Kentucky Teacher of the Year. Butch shared how he uses the principles of customer service in his classroom and encouraged the participants to share a laugh with their students. KECSAC is so excited to welcome this year’s new educators and looks forward to working with all of our partners in the pursuit of a high quality education for all of Kentucky’s students, particularly those most at-risk.


Nancy Gilligan has been in education for over 30 years. Her career includes teaching on the middle and high school levels, coaching elementary and middle school children with learning disabilities, serving as a District Curriculum and Literacy Specialist working with both administrators and teachers K-12, and as an Academic Dean of a large high school. As an Academic Dean she worked with a faculty of 100 to develop curriculum, instruction, and assessment designed to increase student achievement. She was delighted to bring her years of experience to the training and share what she has learned from others. As Ms. Gilligan states, “I have been very fortunate to have educators I could turn to for assistance with planning and implementing differentiated instruction in the classroom. I am more than willing to do this for others as they begin their ‘differentiated instruction journey.’”
Continued from page 1

There are four teachers on staff who concentrate on the core content classes (English, Math, Science and Social Studies) and each teacher takes on an additional subject to teach (Life Skills, Computer Applications, Health/PE or Music). Every teacher does whole group instruction combined with individualized computer lessons for some subjects. “Our goal,” Ms. Shearer shares, “is to prepare every student to make a smooth transition into their life when they leave Otter Creek Academy.”

Like many of the best programs across the commonwealth, Otter Creek seeks to find innovative ways to integrate core content learning objectives with creative and fun projects. One recent project had the girls designing “barn quilts.” Mathematics, art and agriculture lessons merged and formed a legacy for the school—the winning design will be mounted on their campus barn this coming spring.

Many of the teachers have ideas for projects or initiatives that they hope to see realized during their tenure at Otter Creek. Sandy Clark would like to see a JROTC program established; Stephanie Floyd would like to develop a program that will allow the girls to work with animals because she knows that animal husbandry can be both therapeutic and help the girls learn responsibility. Grant Clark would like to create a public-private partnership with a local business to allow the school to plant a green roof, install a solar garden and start a recycling program.

As a new program, the very air of Otter Creek is brimming with hope and fresh energy and this is echoed in Stephanie Floyd’s sentiment: “I am hopeful that Otter Creek Academy is making a difference in the students’ lives. I hope that they are able to stay on the right path and not lose their way.”

**Excerpt**

“When teamwork breaks down... there are likely to be elements of two underlying causes. The first is individualism. One or more individuals will have focused too much on their own narrow needs and interests and not enough on those of the organization as a whole. The second is expedience. Any individuals not contributing effectively to the team’s endeavors will almost certainly be pursuing expedient courses of action instead of more principled approaches that might better serve longer-term, comprehensive objectives and strategies.”

**Grant Clark**

**Teaching Philosophy**

Teach them well and let them lead the way...Every classroom presents a unique community of learners that varies not only in abilities, but also in learning styles. My role as a teacher is to give children the tools with which to cultivate their own gardens of knowledge.

**Stephanie Floyd**

**Teaching Philosophy**

As a teacher I strive to empower each student by helping them to develop the tools needed to be lifelong learners. I believe that with a little help students can come to the realization that learning can be fun when they build on their strengths and natural curiosities.
**Winter 2010-2011**

Teaching in Action: Bellewood

February 9-10
Co-Sponsoring EKU College of Education Diversity Conference Perkins Conference Center, Richmond, KY

---

**KECSAC Deadlines**

December 2010

1st ADM Report, due 15th
1st Census data collection
15th Census form due in to the KECSAC Central Office.

---

**Programs Across Kentucky**

**BOWLING GREEN**
INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS
Warren Regional Juvenile Detention Center

Rebecca Painter from Warren Regional Juvenile Detention Center (WRJDC) nominated the First Baptist Church in Bowling Green for the Governor’s Volunteer Committee Award and they won under the faith based initiatives category.

From the official press release regarding the awards:

First Lady Jane Beshear, Janie Miller, secretary of the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS) and WKYT-TV news anchor Amber Philpott presented the 2009 Governor’s Awards for Outstanding Volunteer Service at the ceremony. The Kentucky Commission on Community Volunteerism and Service (KCCVS) coordinates the annual awards program.
“We recognize you not only for the work you’ve done, but also for the inspiration you’ve provided to many others,” said Mrs. Beshear. “Our Commonwealth is much better off because of your leadership and dedication.”

“Volunteers are driven by a deep compassion to make a difference,” said Sec. Miller. “When they see a need, they are the first to ask, ‘What can I do?’ The volunteers we honor today have made a great impact with their actions and their character. We thank them for their exemplary service.”

BOYD COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Ramey-Estep High School

CL, a Ramey-Estep student, has received a certificate as an official member of her county’s Teen Court where teens perform the roles of the prosecuting and defense attorneys, bailiff, clerk and jury.

What Teen Court Means to Me
By CL

“All rise, Teen Court is now in session. You may all be seated.” Those are the first words you will hear as a member of the Teen Court Program.

Teen Court was first recognized on December 10, 1992 in Lewisville, Texas. The council members included Ann Pomykal, Cynthia White, Judge Darlene Whitten, Justice of Peace Jean McFarling, and City Secretary Marty Hendrex. It wasn’t until September of 1994 that Teen Court was officially established.

Teen Court members not only serve as a positive impact on their peers, but also serve in multiple capacities as officers of the court. The definition of peer pressure is: “A social pressure by members of one’s peer group to take certain actions, adopt certain values, or otherwise conform in order to be accepted.” Most of the time, peer pressure results in negative outcomes, but with the help of Judges and Teen Court members across America the Teen Court program is changing the way peer pressure is being viewed.

When I was first introduced to Teen Court, I accepted this opportunity and thought of it as a responsible and serious task. I am very proud to have received my certificate as an official member of Teen Court. Some people would say Teen Court is an extra-curricular activity and others would say it’s only for fun. Personally, I believe Teen Court has enabled me to show peers that they can be pressured in a good way to hang-out with positive people, and also overcome the negative pressure to fit in with so called “cool” people. Some of the many benefits of positive peer pressure are good friends and family, high self-esteem, self-initiative and a good supportive community. I can say by experience that any teenager who has a desire to help his or her peers will find that Teen Court is a rewarding opportunity.

FAYETTE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Fayette Regional Juvenile Detention Center

Jim Brown, former NFL Cleveland Browns player, and Buzz Burnam, former UK football player, visited the students at Fayette Regional Juvenile Detention Center to encourage them to succeed despite all odds.

JEFFERSON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Maryhurst

An eleventh-grade Maryhurst student, A.W. won first place in Jefferson County School District’s Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Writing Contest last Spring. Her essay entitled “Love is the Light that Transforms our Lives” is excerpted below:

Years before Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke you would have never seen an African American president or an African American singer on the radio. My mom would never have guessed when she was younger that she and her African American friend Suziana would be able to be friends without getting discriminated against by people with stupidity, ignorance and hatred towards those not like them. Martin Luther King Jr. used non violence; he used love to transform not only a few lives but the whole United States of America. He once said “we can not walk alone and as we walk, we must make a pledge that we shall always march ahead. We can not turn back.”

…I also have a dream that no man or woman would die in pain, that people would be courteous and helpful to those with cancer. That people with any other terminal disease would be helped by the family members who has had a loved one pass away while in pain during these tragic diseases... I dream that people will continue to join hands to fight for the rights of gay, bisexuals, lesbians, black, and whites. I dream that everyone will accept each other as equals and as brothers and sisters.

For the Collaborative

Does your program or district have news to share? Something to brag about? Would you like to highlight your summer program or any special projects in the works?

Please submit vignettes, tid-bits, articles or article ideas OR if you’d like a member of KECSAC’s staff to come visit your program and write up a story, contact Heather Carpenter (heather.carpenter@eku.edu or call 859-622-5780).
The Collaborative

Wishing you the best during this holiday season!

— From the KECSAC Family to yours —