“What do you want to be when you grow up?” This question is one of the most frequently asked of young people, and the students at Otter Creek Academy are no exception. In response to this question they often think about, students at the program decided to create a permanent reminder that there are endless career options available to young people today.

With the help of funding from VSA Kentucky (which is a state nonprofit organization dedicated to providing inclusive arts and education programs for children, youth, and adults with disabilities) and the talent of artist-in-residence, Patricia Ritter, students selected several careers of interest to them for art murals depicting the occupations. The students’ choices represented a varied array of jobs, which allowed them to visualize the options available to them once out of school.

The choices of occupations also represented a variety of training methods for the jobs. For example, some of the careers would require on-the-job training, while others would require technical training, or college degrees, in order to further illustrate the options available to them. Students then actually posed as models themselves to create silhouette murals on the walls of the cafeteria/all-purpose room at the Academy.

The display of murals depict silhouettes of a cosmetologist and her client, a teacher, caregiver or mother reading to young children, a dog groomer or someone in the veterinarian field, a health care worker and her patient, a soldier saluting the American flag, a food service worker and her customer, and a teacher with a student. As they are constantly in the room where the murals are located, it is hoped that students will see them and be reminded of the many opportunities available to them as careers.

One of the walls in the mural is also dedicated to a silhouette of three graduates in full regalia tossing their mortarboards into the air in celebration of graduation from high school, or some form of secondary education, in order to help students keep their eye on their goals.

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Dear Friends,

I have written a great deal about the value of education. Certainly, as frequent readers and others know, education was the most powerful tool in my toolbox for developing the kind of life I had imagined for myself. I had wonderful teachers – teachers who cared deeply about me, teachers who encouraged me, pushed me, and challenged me to do more than I thought I could. They did it because they had a relationship with me and were invested in my life. They saw value where other people didn’t. It’s because of my deep belief in education coupled with the vision those teachers helped me create, and my passion for helping students who face similar life challenges, that I do the work I do. It is the reason I was called into this profession. I suspect it is the same reason many of you were called to teach others.

When education is so important in the lives of the children and youth we serve, we must make sure the services we provide are of the highest quality. We can’t afford to offer subpar services when our students are depending on us to give them the skills and resources necessary to live successful, contributing lives of purpose and promise. At KECSAC we are committed to ensuring high quality services by implementing a rigorous, comprehensive, and empowering evaluation model. Our program improvement specialists, each with more than 30 years of experience in education with an emphasis on alternative education, are the driving force of our continuous improvement model. They are a talented team with impressive credentials who are dedicated to partnering with our local school districts, school administrators, teachers and students to ensure the highest level of educational outcomes.

In addition to our team of program improvement specialists, KECSAC uses evaluation standards that are fully aligned with the Kentucky AdvancEd Standards while going even further and including research-based best practice standards for alternative settings. These combined standards help our programs continually move towards high levels of expectations while simultaneously receiving the ongoing support through both onsite assistance and curricular guidelines. These systems are just part of how we all work together to help our students make adequate and appropriate progress towards self-sufficiency, competency, and college and career readiness.

Recently I had the pleasure of meeting a young man from one of our programs. Gage, a student at Lake Cumberland Youth Development Center, talked with me about his experience, the challenges he often faces, and the dreams he has for the future. He is a talented, intelligent, focused young man. As he told his story, there emerged a central figure in his success. Ms. Tillie Slagle, his teacher, has been critically instrumental in helping him reach his academic goals. As he said many times, she never gave up on him and she never stopped working to help him get where he needed to be. At this time he is dually enrolled in both secondary and community college work and finished his first full college semester with a 3.0 GPA. I have such an incredible amount of respect and admiration for our teachers and administrators. The work they do is often unnoticed, often underappreciated, and often criticized. It is, at times, a thankless job. Gage’s story is just one of many that demonstrates the incredible impact our teachers have on the children and youth we serve. Our teachers always keeping their sights on what is important…our students.

Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. - Nelson Mandela
A variety of academic standards and skills were incorporated into the project, with the study of careers as the basis for the curriculum. The actual art work began with discussion and decisions of how best to pose in order to depict the job in each mural, and then when the picture was projected onto the wall the students had to use their math skills to decide on appropriate proportions, and how to outline the life-size silhouette for maximum effect. Art techniques taught by Mrs. Ritter guided the students on how to outline and paint the silhouette. Silhouettes are typical depicted as solid black, however, students decided to give each career mural a pop of color to make them stand out. One student who created a mural was excited with her work and said that, “with Ms. Ritter’s help I became an artist and that’s pretty cool.”

School Administrator Peggy Shearer says that students are very proud to see themselves and their peers on the wall to inspire future students to dream big and work to reach their goals of what they want to be when they “grow up.” One student best described the outcome of the project when she said, “Now every day, when I see the silhouettes, I think about graduation and what I will do after that—I didn’t think about that before. Now I know I can be anything I want to be.”

### Four KECSAC Programs Receive Award of Distinction from KDE for Innovative Alternative Education

In an effort to recognize the work of educators and programs that serve at-risk students, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) has named seven Alternative Programs of Distinction for 2016. The programs were recognized June 8 at the Kentucky Board of Education’s regular meeting in Frankfort. Four of the programs, Bullitt Alternative Center, the Transformational Learning Center, Western Day Treatment, and McCracken Regional School, are also KECSAC-funded programs.

An alternative education program exists to meet the needs of students that cannot be addressed in a traditional classroom setting, but can be met through the assignment of students to alternative classrooms, centers or campuses that are designed to remediate academic performance, improve behavior or provide enhanced learning experiences. Alternative education programs do not include career or technical centers or departments.

Each program selected as an Alternative Program of Distinction receives $2,000 from the Kentucky Department of Education and $1,000 from the Kentucky Center for School Safety for instructional support. Information on the schools also will be posted on the KDE website [www.education.ky.gov](http://www.education.ky.gov) so other schools can use the programs as models.

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<td>McCracken County</td>
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Famous Wounded Warrior Speaks at Christian County Day Treatment

On May 6, 2016, Bobby Henline visited Christian County Day Treatment as a guest speaker to share his story and message of inspiration with the students.

Mr. Henline is now a motivational speaker and comedian, but it is his history as a U.S. service member that has gained him notoriety as an “American hero.” Bobby is a veteran of Desert Storm and was deployed to Iraq three times with the 82nd Airborne Division and the 3rd Armored Calvary regiment. On April 7, 2007, his Humvee was hit by a roadside bomb just north of Baghdad. Of the five men in the vehicle, Bobby was the only survivor. He was burned on more than 38 percent of his body, including his head which was burned to the skull. He spent six months in the hospital fighting for his life and has had more than 40 surgeries, including the amputation of his left hand. However, it is through his experiences and adversity that Mr. Henline brings perspective and inspiration to people’s lives.

After his speech, some students were interviewed about their thoughts and feelings about Mr. Henline. One student said she was impressed with his attitude and was touched by his story, also adding that, “it felt like he was open and sincere.” During his visit he also didn’t wear his prosthetic hand, and when asked about that, he said that he wanted the students to see his real self.

Another student said that she was impressed with how he handled himself and will always remember his “bubbly” personality. She said that he was very upbeat and was surprisingly comical about himself and reflected on her own struggles saying, “My issues are nothing compared to what he’s gone through.”

Mr. Henline believes that he was kept alive for a reason. He believes his mission is to help create awareness for burn survivors, to inspire people to live life to the fullest, and to heal others through his story and laughter.

Brook - Dupont Program Enjoys the Arts This Spring!

The students at the Brook - Dupont School in Jefferson County were the recipients of a generous grant from the Fund for the Arts program this spring. As a result, many arts programs such as the Louisville Ballet, Blue Apple Players, Kentucky Shakespeare, Squallis Puppeteers and Kentucky Museum of Arts and Crafts have entertained and enlightened the students with exciting performances.

The Louisville Ballet Outreach program was a week-long workshop that taught students the elements of dance, and there was school-wide participation to learn dances from a variety of cultures around the world. Kentucky Shakespeare, a non-profit theatre company, performed a selection from “The Bard” that incorporated strategies that taught conflict resolution, which could be used in today’s world. In addition, Walden Theatre’s Blue Apple Players highlighted “Tall Tales” that showcased famous legends and tall tales featured in many popular children’s books. Squallis Puppeteers performed a piece called “Food Fight,” which was a humorous take on friendship and relationship building. The Kentucky Museum of Arts and Crafts will also loan the school the “Mobile Museum,” which includes artifacts and items found in historical documents making history come alive. The grant was made possible by the Fund for the Arts and WHAS Crusade for Children as a part of the “EVERY CHILD Arts in Education” initiative. The school was very grateful that their students were able to take advantage of this opportunity and appreciate the artists who visited.
Otter Creek Students Celebrate Derby Day

This year in recognition and celebration of the Kentucky Derby, Otter Creek Academy decided to teach students the history of the event, create crafts, and participate in Derby-like events on May 6. No Derby is complete without an iconic derby hat, so the students crafted their own using newspaper and masking tape, and decorating them with paint and flowers. Then each student also crafted their own horse out of tobacco sticks, socks, felt, yarn, and various decorations with the help of teachers and staff. After their horses were made the young ladies at the school raced their horses in their very own “Run for the Roses.” Their history lesson included how the Derby began, the history of the horse racing industry in Kentucky, and various facts about former Derbies. The Derby festivities also included a formal dinner for the students, staff and guests with Derby Pie, Kentucky Hot Browns, wedge salads and virgin mint juleps for drinks. Before dinner there was also a history lesson about these iconic Kentucky foods and drink. After lunch, the girls watched the movie “Secretariat” to wrap up a fun, informative and exciting day of Kentucky Derby celebrations.

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) Foundation, the educational arm of the nation’s largest lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender civil rights organization, announced in April that Children’s Home of Northern Kentucky (CHNK) has earned the foundation’s All Children—All Families seal of recognition for its commitment to supporting and serving LGBTQ youth.

The All Children — All Families (ACAF) initiative, launched in 2007, seeks to enhance LGBTQ cultural competence among child welfare professionals and to educate LGBTQ people about opportunities to become foster or adoptive parents to waiting children. To date, ACAF has over 95 participating agencies across the country and has awarded 60 seals of recognition. Children’s Home of Northern Kentucky becomes the first child welfare agency in the Commonwealth of Kentucky to receive this distinction.

The agency is simultaneously launching a trauma-informed approach to care utilizing the internationally recognized Sanctuary Model, which emphasizes safety and the roles that emotion and loss can play in creating healthy change. CHNK is working toward Sanctuary certification over a three-year implementation cycle. “CHNK’s leadership in providing culturally-sensitive services to LGBTQ youth is one aspect of our overall approach in creating an environment that is safe and supportive for all our families and clients,” said Rick Wurth, CHNK Chief Executive Officer.

The seal of recognition was officially unveiled on April 20 by local HRC representatives during a public event to honor CHNK for this accomplishment. Children’s Home of Northern Kentucky earned the honor by meeting HRC’s criteria for fully-inclusive policies and practices in working with the LGBTQ community. The HRC Foundation’s All Children—All Families initiative provides a comprehensive framework, from client non-discrimination policies to staff training, that assists agencies like CHNK in establishing policies and practices that welcome, support, and affirm LGBTQ youth and in implementing ongoing efforts to improve LGBTQ competence. With 400,000 children in the nation’s foster care system and a disproportionately high number who identify as LGBTQ, there is an urgent need to increase the capacity of child welfare agencies to competently serve these youth. LGBTQ youth.”
Spring Events and Projects At Calloway County Day Treatment

As a culminating activity in their science classroom’s study of cells, Calloway County Day Treatment students had the opportunity to make a “cell” using a large sugar cookie and decorating it with the various organelles made of candy found in both plant and animal cells. Some students chose to make a plant cell which has a cell wall, a large vacuole and chloroplast that animal cells don’t have. After decorating the “cells” the students enjoyed cookies and milk.

The Animal Tales program came to the program this spring to showcase the unique qualities of different types of animals. The presentation included many animals such as a bull frog, baby kangaroo, a tortoise, different types of snakes, a lizard and a chinchilla. Students learned about the different survival skills that each animal had and some students even got to hold the boa constrictor with the help of the presenter.

Eighth and tenth grade students had the opportunity to attend the reality store as a part of their curriculum. Students were given a budget and had the task of visiting stations with monthly expenses in a mock real-world experience with money. This exercise helps students prepare to work with personal finances in the future.

Morehead YDC Students Use Art as Therapy

Morehead Youth Development Center residents have recently had the opportunity to participate a different kind of therapy with Treatment Director Stephanie Goodpaster. The students have been using art as a way to cope with anxiety, depression, and trauma. Those who choose to paint during sessions have expressed a sense of calmness and relaxation during this process. Ms. Goodpaster uses art therapy as an extension of the student’s self to express what they have been through, or what is currently on their mind. Some residents express that through art, they have an outlet to escape in a safe place, and enjoy themselves.
‘Red Sun’ Author Extols Reading as Valuable Exercise for the Brain

Original article by Tammy L. Lane for Fayette County Public Schools

Literacy advocate Alane Adams maintains a steady beat with a clear message: “Reading is the single most important thing you can do to make your life better. Your brain is a muscle, and if you exercise a muscle, you get stronger. If you exercise your brain, you’ll get smarter.”

The California-based author shared that mantra with students at the Fayette Regional Juvenile Detention Center, Bryan Station Middle School, Lexington Traditional Magnet School, and Leestown Middle School in April as the Lexington Public Library kicked off its summer reading program.

“How she explained things really made you think about it,” said one 17-year-old at the detention center. “Reading really expands one’s mind, especially with science fiction. It makes you have a new perspective on things.”

As one example, Adams mentioned scientists born in the 1920s who enabled NASA to reach the moon in the 1960s. “Reading grows your imagination and ability to see things that have never happened,” she told the teenagers. “Reading helps your brain comprehend the world around you and helps you become a problem-solver. Books also give us hope. Pick up a book and read it. It’s the best hope to improve your brain, and the payoff is enormous when you begin to enjoy the stories.”

Adams, who is developing a youth fantasy series, referenced her first novel “The Red Sun,” the Harry Potter books and Katniss Everdeen of “The Hunger Games” in connecting with the students. “One thing we like about characters that we can relate to is they have flaws,” Adams noted.

She also shared that she doesn’t always get the details of her books right at first. “As I’m writing, my brain is unwinding the story in real time,” said Adams, who doesn’t make an outline. Then through multiple drafts and edits, she can massage the plot — remembering that the character’s dilemma is what holds readers’ interest.

Adams had sent 10 copies of “The Red Sun” and resource materials to Seth Shannon, the English teacher at the detention center, whose classes include three or four dozen students in grades 8-12. These youths, who compared Adams’ book to the Percy Jackson series, had explored “The Red Sun” for about three weeks before Adams came to visit. In class they often map out the action to track the characters. “It’s a pretty lengthy book, and there’s a lot going on,” Shannon said. He appreciated Adams exposing his classes to a genre they might not ordinarily choose and acknowledged the author’s broader impact, saying, “She has made a huge push for educating students on the importance and benefits of literacy in the struggle against poverty.”