

**Scholarship and Leadership Program
Niswonger Foundation Board Update
Thursday, November 16, 2017**

Scholar Selection Process

- The interviews for the 2018 Niswonger Scholars were conducted on Thursday, November 9, 2017. We had 93 nominations this year. Nancy interviewed 61 of these nominees to identify the 12 finalists.
- Alumni Gage Armstrong, Dr. Katie Baker, Law Loving, and Virginia Hines Pfeifer, joined Board Representative Nikki Niswonger as members of this year's Selection Committee.
- See Board material (Ratification of Scholarship Selections) with names of the Niswonger Scholar candidates for Board discussion and approval.

Leadership Development

- *Winter Training* will be Thursday and Friday, December 21 and 22 at the General Morgan Inn.
- **We invite our Board Members to join us for all or part of our training activities.**
- **Opportunities for informal time with the Scholars will be a casual dinner and holiday party on Thursday evening, December 21; and breakfast on Friday, December 22, at 8:00 a.m. at the General Morgan Inn.**
- The text for our Winter Training is "*What Got You Here Won't Get You There*" by Marshall Goldsmith. The Scholars have begun "pre-training" assignments that will prepare them for the two days of activities.
- The agenda for *2017 Winter Training* is attached to this report.

Scholar Updates

- The calendar for 2017-2018 Scholar activities is included as an attachment.
- Scholar News is included as an attachment.

Alumni Scholar Updates

- Alumni Scholar News is included as an attachment.
- **Board Members, with spouses or guests, are invited to join the Alumni Scholars for a Holiday Gathering and Dinner on Saturday, December 16, General Morgan Inn, 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. (Reception 5:00; Dinner 6:00; Social Time 7:00)**

Publications

- The Scholars Directory has been completed and delivered.

Handouts

- Training Text
- Scholar Contact Information

**Programs and Partnerships
Niswonger Foundation Board Update
Thursday, November 16, 2017**

Partnership Updates

- The 2017 *Young People's Concert* was a success. With the theme of "*Uncle Sam's Symphony*," the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra played for two fully booked performances. The curriculum provided to the classrooms was based on developing an understanding of the branches of the U.S. government, comparing them to the sections of a symphony. The students held an election to determine one of the musical selections. Eleven school systems were represented.
- Activities with the *International Storytelling Center* partnership included the international live-streaming of the National Storytelling Festival on Friday, October 6. The live stream reached more than 20 countries (from China, to Indonesia, to Europe) and was viewed in all 50 U.S. States. The Foundation sponsored a Teachers' Storytelling Workshop on Saturday, September 16, in Jonesborough, and continue to provide free tickets to the "Teller in Residence" programs for economically challenged school children throughout the year.
- The Dictionary Project for third graders in all Greene County Schools will be completed in November. Barbara coordinates the distribution with volunteers from the Youth Builders organization. There were 664 dictionaries distributed this year. Thank you to Nikki Niswonger for being one of the volunteers.

Literacy Initiative Focused on Effectiveness (LIFE)

Greene County

- Second Annual – "*A Day in the LIFE*" programs have been completed at all three pilot schools.
 - Event Goal- provide parents and caregivers a look into their child's daily literacy routine, while also providing them with the tools necessary to help their children at home.
 - Children led their guests throughout the school to engage in a hands-on experience: whole group instruction, writer's workshop, the computer lab, and small group instruction called ELG's (Early Learning Groups).
 - A meal was provided, by the Niswonger Foundation, for all families, as well as chances to win door prizes.
 - All families in attendance received bags to take home that contained items such as good-fit books (books matched to support that child's reading level and interest), school supplies, T-shirts, book lights, and various other treats! As an extension to this event, community partners are also involved by donating items or setting up booths during the evening.
- Greene County teacher assistants representing the three pilot schools attended a literacy event at Walter's State Community College.

- Another successful Community Literacy Event was held on Saturday, October 28th. The second annual “BOOOOK Fest” was held at the Greene County Fairgrounds. Each school chose a book to promote at their table by including arts, crafts, music, costumes, and take home activities related to that text. Students moved from table to table in excitement as the unique and engaging events allowed for hands-on fun. Along with the schools, local vendors and businesses were involved, giving out information and books. After students collected stamps for visiting tables, they could redeem them for cotton candy, popcorn, a hot dog and chips, or hot chocolate. Each student received a free book as they were leaving, and door prizes were awarded. A DJ played lively music throughout the event, and at one point, people of all ages were dancing to several well-known tunes! Other activities included rock painting, face painting, train rides, and trunk or treating provided by local churches. Greene County is extremely thankful to all the community partners that played a role in the success of this day.

Hancock County

- Phonics Training for K-2 Teachers was held on August 29. Amanda Carpenter (Niswonger Literacy Specialist) and Amber Jeffers, first grade teacher at Ottway, traveled to Hancock Elementary and conducted the training for teachers and assistants at Hancock Elementary relating to a phonics program developed by Haggerty Phonics.
- A Media Event was held on Thursday, October 5, to announce two literacy grants that will establish the Hancock County LIFE program.
 - \$450,000 grant from the Wal-Mart Foundation
 - \$50,000 grant from the Annenberg Fund for Schools
- Speakers at the event were:
 - Scott Niswonger, Chairman and Founder of the Niswonger Foundation;
 - Rob Mahaffey, Executive Director of the Rural School and Community Trust;
 - Tony Seal, Director of Hancock Co. Schools;
 - Dr. Vicki Kirk, Tennessee’s Deputy Commissioner of Education;
 - Thomas Harrison, V, County Mayor
 - Sara Holt, Niswonger Hancock County Literacy Specialist;
 - David Greene, Jr., a parent of Hancock Elementary students;
 - Addilyn Mabe, second grade student;
 - Jackson Jones, first grade student; and
 - Dr. Nancy Dishner
- Visitors were divided into groups to tour several K-2 classrooms, and the Book Room. This three-year K-2 literacy initiative is designed to improve foundational skills necessary for reading mastery.

Niswonger Online/ NiswongerCARE Online

- Niswonger Online fall semester is running smoothly. The enrollment is 365 with 238 from our local consortium schools and 127 from our new NiswongerCARE systems.
- Our most utilized courses this semester are Foreign Languages, Geometry, Personal Finance, and Advanced Placement.
- Fall 2017 courses will close on Dec 8th, final grades will be ready for the schools on Dec 11th.

- Schools will be able to begin enrollment for Spring 2018 on Nov 13th. Spring enrollment will run until Jan 31st.
- Spring 2018 Semester will run from Jan 16th to May 11th.
- NiswongerCARE Expansion
 - We are currently waiting on word from the CARE Foundation for the approval of an updated timeline to bring on more systems. Once this approval is given we will reach out to more rural systems throughout Tennessee.

NiswongerCARE College and Career Advising

- Additional strategies and resources have been implemented to ensure that students have greater access to resources for career exploration and “data driven decision making.
- Advisors and Leadership team participated in several professional learning events, including the following:
 - *ACT College and Readiness Workshop*
 - *University of Tennessee Counselor Workshop*
 - *Tennessee School Counselor and Administrator Institute*
 - *Federal Financial Aid Toolkit Webinar*
 - *CollegeforTN (free college and career planning resource for students and educators)*
 - *US Department of Education: Using the Financial Aid Toolkit and Resources*
 - *WE Track Training*
 - *NiswongerCARE monthly staff meetings (August, September, October)*
- Lucas Hitechew has taken on the leadership role of Technology Coordinator, in addition to his role as an Advisor. He is responsible for the design and maintenance of our website <http://www.niswongercare.com/> where students and parents have access to resources and information geared specifically to our Northeast Tennessee students. Gabby Valentine, another of our Advisors assists Lucas in her role as Social Media Coordinator, and posts regular updates, resources, and photos to our Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram accounts.
- NiswongerCARE sponsored a contest to attract more student followers on all of our social media platforms and engage with them in the college search process. Students were given a chance to win a \$25 gift card by following us on Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook and tagging themselves in a photo using #EastTNP2C where they are either on a college visit, working on a college application, or wearing an item of college clothing. A Hampton High School student was selected as the winner.
- Campaign is underway to engage celebrities and successful leaders with ties to Northeast Tennessee for outreach to students through our social media outlets. The call to action includes a request to create an encouraging post geared specifically to our students using the branding hashtag, #bouNdforsuccEssTN.
- *College App Week* events were held in all high schools with over 3,000 students submitting college applications.
- All high schools have held *FAFSA Frenzy* events.
- The summer melt program, *Big-Bright-Future* kicked off in June 2017. Virtual advising and support was provided to 703 of our most at-risk, recent high school graduates. Advisors utilized texting and other virtual platforms as the primary form of communication to ensure that those students at risk of not matriculating to the post-secondary campus received the help and encouragement that they need to make it to their selected post-secondary institution in the fall.
- 2017-2018 School Year (ytd) Outcomes:

- Advisors held Individual and group meetings with 6,324 students.
- *TN Promise* application assistance was provided to 2,019 students.
- tnAchieves latest report (10/9) shows that 63% of our students have submitted TN Promise applications, compared to 53% of tnAchieves total students.

CareerConnect

- Three, monthly, 10th grade meetings have been completed. Topics included personal communication, teamwork, and completion of personality inventories. An industry partner will be speaking at the November meeting.
- Three 11th grade meetings have been completed. Topics included grit, financial literacy, and professional communication.
- Dates for Spring meetings and Summer Experiences have been set. The Summer Experience for 11th graders will be held in June. The 10th grade program will be in July.
- The selection process has been evaluated and is being refined. The selection process for the third class of CareerConnect Explorers will begin in January. An additional focus is being placed on data collection in this round.
- *WE Track* System is online with 31/38 eligible schools participating (Hancock Co, University School, 5 Sevier Co. high schools are not yet onboard). There are over 2000 active users, at last count. Phase 2+ will provide additional upgrades and is expected to be online by end of November. Expansion discussions taking place with Rutherford Co. and SE TN Pathways, which represents Hamilton, Bradley, Meigs, Marion and McMinn Counties.

Leadership in Blended and Digital Learning Principal Professional Development

- The second cohort of LBDL has 34 participants- Principals, Assistant Principals, and 2 teacher leaders.
- The first face-to-face meeting was held on Monday Oct 30th at the Kingsport City Schools Central Office, Eastman Board Room.
- The next face-to-face meeting will be on Nov 17th at Greeneville City School's Professional Development Center, 8:30-3:30.

Grant Activity

- ***The Niswonger Foundation is a 2017 recipient of an Education Innovation and Research (EIR) grant from the U.S. Department of Education. This grant, with the required matching funds, will provide more than eight million dollars to assist schools in Northeast Tennessee. The United States Department of Education selected 16 grant recipients from 379 proposals based on recommendations from independent peer review panels. The grant will be used to fund a program entitled: Rural LIFE (Literacy Initiative Focused on Effectiveness). The purpose of the grant is to validate the use of personalized learning strategies, with the goal of focusing on literacy to improve academic achievement for students in grades six through eight.***

The grant will serve eighteen school systems in Northeast Tennessee (Bristol City, Carter County, Cocke County, Elizabethton City, Greene County, Greeneville City, Hamblen County, Hancock County, Hawkins County, Jefferson County, Johnson City, Johnson County, Kingsport City, Newport City, Rogersville City, Sullivan County, Unicoi County, and Washington County). Approximately 19,700 students are served by Rural LIFE-participating schools.

- The Niswonger Foundation joined in partnership with Westat to submit a grant proposal for the establishment of the *National Research and Development Center to Improve Rural Education*. If funded, the role of the Niswonger Foundation would be to provide a basis for research using the CareerConnect program. The grant would provide an opportunity to expand the CareerConnect program to five additional high schools in Northeast Tennessee.

Boards, Committees and Activities

- Gina and Richard attended the International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL). Gina was a session presenter. She met administrators, foundation directors, and school consultants from all over the U.S. who work with rural systems and want to know more about our consortium and the online program.
- Scott, David Golden and Nancy attended the Governor's Higher Education Summit, in Nashville, on August 18.
- In August, Richard and Nancy visited with all new or interim directors of schools in the region – Hugh Clement (Hamblen), Dr. Steve Barnett (Johnson City), Dwain Arnold (Kingsport City) and Dr. Kimber Haliburton (Washington County).
- Nancy met with the new Dean of the Clemmer College of Education, at ETSU, on August 29.
- Richard and Nancy attended the IDEA Academy at Eastman, on September 12.
- Nancy attended the First Lady's Luncheon, as a guest of Nikki Niswonger, on September 19, in Nashville.
- Richard and Nancy attended the Superintendent's Study Council on September 20.
- Nancy was invited by the Governor's office to meet with representatives of BDT & Company, LLC. She was asked to give a presentation on the Niswonger Foundation's college and career advising efforts, on September 26, in Nashville. Subsequently, Nancy and Denise have been contacted for follow-up discussions regarding the advising program.
- Richard and Nancy met with Deputy Commissioner, Dr. Vicki Kirk, on September 8 and October 27 to update the State Department regarding Niswonger Foundation activities.
- Scott, Nikki, Larry, Richard, Amanda and Nancy attended the Media Event at Hancock County Elementary on October 5. We were accompanied by Rob Mahaffey, Executive Director of the Rural School and Community Trust.
- The Niswonger Foundation hosted a Niswonger Consortium meeting on October 18.
- Scott and Nancy attended a Tusculum Board of Trustees Meeting on October 19-20.
- Nancy attended a Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities (TICUA) meeting on October 25, in Nashville.
- Larry, Amanda and Nancy attended the Tri-Cities Crissy Haslam Early Literacy Event, on November 6, 2017, in Kingsport.

- Nancy participated in a panel meeting to select nominees for the military academies, at the request of Congressman Phil Roe, on Friday, November 10.
- Nancy met with Blair Taylor and Mike Carpenter with Tennessee Quality Early Education, on Tuesday, November 14, in Nashville.
- Nancy served on the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) board on Wednesday, November 15, in Nashville.

Publicity and Publications

- News clippings and press releases are available for review.
- The Niswonger Foundation website has been updated.
- Niswonger Foundation Annual Report has been completed.