

# NISWONGER FOUNDATION

## Putting the Pieces in PLACE



Established in 2001 with the mission “to create opportunities for individual and community growth through education and other sustainable projects,” the Niswonger Foundation was envisioned and implemented by Scott M. Niswonger who saw the critical importance of investing in the place he calls home.

The guiding principle leading to the success of this work is Scott’s philosophy of “Learn – Earn – Return.” Following his model of dedication to his home community, the programs of the Foundation seek to empower others to learn a skill, gain wisdom, and earn a living that can support families and the community. Importantly, he believes that wisdom and those earnings should be returned through work and service in greater measure than has been provided to each of us.

The Foundation has a solid reputation as a regional, state, and national leader in support of quality public education through the efforts of its School Partnership Programs. While advancing the cause of quality education, in general, the Niswonger Foundation is known for designing and implementing work in support of meeting the challenges of rural education. Fundamental to the success of the Niswonger Foundation has been a clear focus on removing constraints to educational innovation and problem solving, thus allowing school districts to better provide for student needs. Through numerous private, state, and federal grants, this work spans pre-kindergarten through post-secondary educational research, professional development, and direct student support.

The leadership of Northeast Tennessee is being directly supported by the Niswonger Scholarship and Leadership Program. With the first class of Scholars selected in 2002, these leaders are contractually committed, in cooperation with the Niswonger Foundation, to live, work and serve in this region that has heavily invested in their futures. The “return” is already evident, with Niswonger Scholar Alumni serving as teachers, counselors, doctors, nurses, engineers, professors, business leaders, and more, across Northeast Tennessee.

This Annual Report proudly presents this year’s successes as we continue to “Put the Pieces in PLACE.”

“

**It has been my observation that people who are most successful with puzzles are those who can instinctively see the whole picture while holding only the individual pieces in their hands. The success of our Niswonger Foundation team comes from the belief that every piece is equally important, and the effort of every person is essential for putting the pieces in PLACE.**

**That is how we are creating the perfect picture.**

**Scott M. Niswonger**  
Chairman and Founder

# STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

JUNE 30, 2023

## ASSETS

Cash	\$	3,574,370
Restricted Cash		37,392
Grants Receivable		2,240,978
Investments		10,070,544
Prepaid Expenses & Other Assets		600
Student Loans Receivable		82,762
Note Receivable		10,000
Collections		101,861
Property & Equipment, Net of Accumulated Depreciation		5,736,768
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>21,855,275</b>

## LIABILITIES

Accounts Payable & Other Accrued Liabilities	\$	896,715
Deferred Revenue		89,435
Lines of Credit		934,462
USDA Loan		601,935
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>2,522,547</b>

## NET ASSETS

Without Donor Restrictions		18,332,728
With Donor Restrictions		1,000,000

**TOTAL NET ASSETS** **\$ 19,332,728**

**TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS\*** **\$ 21,855,275**

## CONTRIBUTORS TO THE NISWONGER FOUNDATION

JULY 1, 2022-JUNE 30, 2023

Hope Adkins	Dennis and Donna Depew	Ken and Debbie Oldenberg
Ballad Health	Harold and Nancy Dishner	Michael and Gwen Roberts
The Brotherton Foundation	James F. Durham	Ricky and Robin Shepherd
Sherry Cockerham	David Hatley	State Farm Insurance
Paul and Tammy Carmichael	Jersey Mike's Subs	Matt Strunk
Elliott (EJ) and Leslie Creutzinger	Chris Marsh/Marsh Petroleum	Chuck and Karla Niswonger Terry
Patrick and Susan Creutzinger	Gary Nave	Transport Enterprise Leasing LLC
Edward Arellano and Sarah Creutzinger	Scott and Nikki Niswonger	Your Cause Corporate Giving

## GRANT PARTNERS

Ballad Health	State of Tennessee, Office of the Governor
Brotherton Family Foundation	REL Appalachia (SRI International)
Care Foundation of America	Tennessee Department of Education
New Teacher Center	Tennessee State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE)
Northeast Tennessee Consortium of School Districts	United States Department of Education

\*The Niswonger Foundation distributed **\$11,207,146** to educational programs and scholarship awards in the fiscal year 2023.

## AN OPERATING FOUNDATION

The Niswonger Foundation was founded by businessman and philanthropist Scott M. Niswonger. Unlike most private foundations, the Niswonger Foundation was established as an operating foundation with its own programs and projects. The Foundation is also approved as a charitable organization. Though a percentage of its operating funds go towards grant making, most funds go into the Foundation's two primary programs: a scholarship and leadership program for selected college students committed to returning to the region and a partnership program for schools.



## PROVIDING COLLEGE AND CAREER ADVISING FOR STUDENTS IN NORTHEAST TENNESSEE SINCE 2015


NiswongerCARE is committed to the schools and students in Northeast Tennessee through its work to develop a stronger college-going and career-ready culture, with the expectation of post-secondary attainment for all.

### 2023 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- NiswongerCARE served **5,705** students from **26** high schools in **14** school districts.
- CARE advisors helped students submit over **3,500** college applications.



  
**5,705**  
 High School  
 Students Served

  
**3,500+**  
 College Applications  
 Submitted

  
**TENNESSEE PROMISE**  
**98%**  
 of eligible seniors completed  
 a TN Promise application

## WHAT WE DO

**FOR  
SCHOOLS**

**FOR  
STUDENTS**

**CARE  
ADVISORS**

### NiswongerCARE provides

- direct services administered by trained college access professionals
- events and activities designed to strengthen the schoolwide college-going culture
- access to resources and professional learning

### NiswongerCARE provides

- college and career planning services
- assistance in completing college applications
- assistance in completing financial aid documents

College access professionals called **CARE Advisors** work closely with students in their assigned school(s) to submit FAFSAs, apply for college, and complete enrollment paperwork.

### PATH TO COLLEGE EVENTS

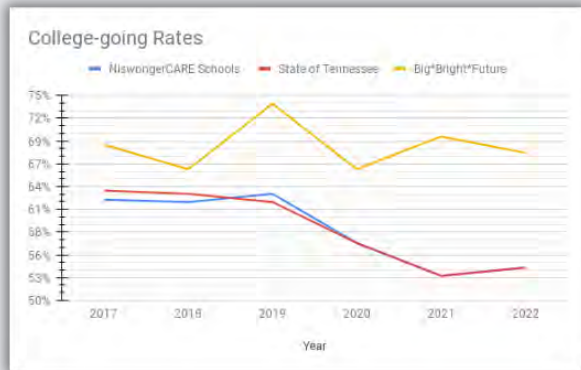


# SPOTLIGHT ON BIG\*BRIGHT\*FUTURE

For six years now, NiswongerCARE’s **Big\*Bright\*Future (B\*B\*F)** summer melt initiative has successfully prepared recently graduated seniors for the next step in their personal education journey: post-secondary education. The program mitigates “summer melt,” or the phenomena where recently graduated students never actually register for fall semester coursework even though they have been admitted and plan to attend a post-secondary institution.

**B\*B\*F students** receive

- weekly personalized text messages based on their college choice throughout the summer and early fall;
- progress tracking and monitoring from CARE advisors who meet them where they are;
- guidance to navigate through the final steps to official post-secondary enrollment;
- and information regarding post-secondary updates, changes, and deadlines.



## COLLEGE-GOING RATES EXCEED STATEWIDE AVERAGE

Since the program’s inception in 2017, students who have participated in B\*B\*F have consistently enrolled at post-secondary institutions at higher rates than other students across the state. This year, the college-going rate of B\*B\*F students was 68%—nearly 15% higher than the state average!

## PROGRAM STAFF



**Denise Arnold**  
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**Anita Kilbourne-Greer**  
Associate Director  
agreer@niswongerfoundation.org



**2023 CARE Advisors.** Top row (L-R): Hannah Scheurer, Justin Hanvey, Peyton Vance, Katlyn Jones, Emily Emerick, Cayla Simerly, and Colt Collins; Bottom row (L-R): Jasmine Martin, Jackie Bauer, Holly Frye, Shannon Sands, Lauren Garrison, Taylor Shanks, and Heidi Armstrong-Dyer

**LEARN MORE**



[bit.ly/NF\\_NiswongerCARE](https://bit.ly/NF_NiswongerCARE)





## INCREASING EDUCATOR ACCESS TO RESOURCES, DATA, AND COLLABORATIVE EXPERIENCES

**Comprehensive Educational Resources (CER)** is an educational consortium that serves 28 school districts in Northeast Tennessee and across the state. A collaborative partnership between these school districts and the Niswonger Foundation, CER reaches approximately 134,000 students.



### 2023 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- CER reached **9,473 teachers, 134,000 students, and 295 schools in 28 districts.**
- Twenty educators from 7 districts are participating in the current CER Leadership Academy cohort.
- CER expanded the number of Common Formative Assessments (CFAs) this year to include grades 3-8 (math, ELA, science, and SS) and all EOC subjects. The number of school districts using these CFAs also increased to 22.
- CER created supplemental materials and course content to support: AP Human Geography, K-5 writing, K-5 integrated science, new statewide computer science standards, 6-8 standards, Social Studies standards, and Math standards.



The most important lesson I've taken from the CER team is to design lesson plans that fit your personal teaching style. If you're excited to teach the lesson, the students will be just as excited to learn it.

**John Wagner**  
World History  
South Greene High School

## WHAT WE DO

### FOR EDUCATORS

#### CER provides

- regional materials aligned to state standards
- pacing guides for all core subjects
- benchmark assessments to ensure students master essential skills
- a data management system
- time and space for educators to collaborate across schools and districts

### LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

**CER Leadership Academy** is a year-long program where a cohort of teacher leaders from CER districts take a hands-on approach to learning about the practical aspects of school administration. Led by current principals and district supervisors, the academy works in a collaborative way to develop potential administrators for each participating district who are ready to face the challenges of school leadership from day one.



Jerry Boyd (l), Director of Schools in Washington County, welcomes participants to CER's Leadership Academy.



## OVER 3,000 EDUCATORS ATTEND LEARNING TOGETHER DAY 2023

K-12 educators across Northeast Tennessee joined their colleagues for the third annual **Learning Together Day** on October 16, 2023.

Held simultaneously at nine different locations throughout the region, this event gave educators the opportunity to engage in subject-specific discussions centered around best practices in their field and to build relationships with their regional colleagues.

Sponsors include Ballad Health, East Tennessee State University, King University, Kingsport Higher Education Center, Northeast State Community College, Milligan University, Tusculum University, Walters State Community College, Tennessee Organization of School Superintendents, eight Northeast Tennessee school districts, and University School.



### A DAY OF COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

It is always a pleasure to have the opportunity to collaborate with people who are doing the same work as I am but in a different way.

**DELYNN LEJONG-MCCASH**  
HAMBLEN COUNTY SCHOOLS

This day was a great opportunity to collaborate with other teachers and share best practices with colleagues throughout our region.

**DR. SCOTT TRENT**  
HAWKINS COUNTY SCHOOLS

These resources are high quality and are guaranteed to benefit my students in the classroom.

**ALEXIS BIER**  
ELIZABETHTON CITY SCHOOLS

## DEVELOPING ACADEMIC COACHES

**Developing Academic Coaches (DAC)** supports instructional coaches with direct job-embedded training, guided coaching cycles, and high-leverage instructional tools provided by the New Teacher Center. In early 2023, DAC partnered with CER to lead instructional coaching collaboratives, meeting quarterly with 81 instructional coaches throughout the state. DAC also leads 24 districts in 6 different math textbook collaboratives designed to support implementation. These collaboratives participate in class visits to script best practices around adopted materials and share them across the consortium.



Eric Campbell (l), an educator from Washington County Schools, completed a 3-year DAC coaching and training partnership.

### PROGRAM DIRECTOR



**Dr. Mia Hyde**  
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### DAC STAFF

**Dr. Sherry Cockerham**, Math Project Director/Lead Coach  
**Dr. Allison Seeley**, ELA Project Director/Lead Coach

### LEARN MORE



[bit.ly/NF CER](https://bit.ly/NF_CER)





**PROVIDING LITERACY AND MATH TUTORING SINCE 2021**

**Project On-Track** is a high-dosage, low-ratio math and ELA tutoring program serving grades 1-8 in Northeast Tennessee. As a TN Accelerating Literacy and Learning Corps (TN ALL Corps) partner, Project On-Track ensures students receive frequent, direct support from highly-trained tutors.

## 2023 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Project On-Track served **7,689 students** from **110 schools** in **18 school districts**.
- Approximately 88% of students served during the 2022-2023 school year made academic gains based on benchmark assessments in literacy and math.
- Other school districts and community partners have replicated Project On-Track's tutoring model.



**7,689**

Students received high-dosage, low-ratio tutoring



**460**

Tutors trained to use high-quality instructional materials



**88%**

of students served made academic gains

## WHAT WE DO

### FOR STUDENTS

#### Project On-Track provides

- high-dosage tutoring at least 30 minutes twice a week for at least 12 weeks each semester
- daily, consistent tutoring sessions either before, during, or after school
- individualized instructional support in small groups with the same tutor each session
- personalized feedback to help each student improve

### FOR FAMILIES

#### Project On-Track provides

- family engagement toolkits
- additional resources for at-home academic support

## ENGAGING FAMILIES

### Resources for Continued Learning

Because of Project On-Track, student participants and their families can access at-home academic support, such as books for students' at-home libraries and a variety of math manipulatives.

After curating a list of quality, grade-appropriate books, Project On-Track staff delivered over 7,000 books to students who participate in literacy tutoring. Each child received 3 books to take home and read with their families. Additionally, over 700 math students took home gift bags of math manipulatives, which helps students practice their critical thinking skills through a hands-on approach and allows them to continue their learning at home.

### Staying Connected

Project On-Track stays connected with students and their families through a monthly newsletter, a text-messaging platform called Signal Vine, and a monthly parent webinar.



Students receiving Project On-Track math and literacy tutoring took home family engagement kits and books. Top Row (l-r): A math manipulative kit for grades 3-5 and 1-2. Bottom (l-r): Students browse book titles to take home; Math manipulative kits for grades 6-8.



## PROJECT ON-TRACK HOSTS COMMUNITY PARTNERS

In December 2023, the Niswonger Foundation and Project On-Track hosted Robbin Masters, TN ALL Corps Project Manager, and several community partner colleagues. The group spent the day visiting tutoring sites across the entire region.



## PROGRAM STAFF



**Dr. Debra Bentley**  
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**Stephanie Boyd**, Literacy Curriculum Specialist  
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**Dr. Bethany Fillers**, Communications Liaison/Data Analyst  
**Wendy Kiser**, Communications Liaison/Data Analyst  
**Dr. Anne Littleford**, Family Outreach/Engagement  
**John Payne**, Software Support Specialist  
**Miranda Russell**, Trauma-informed Care Specialist



## LEARN MORE



[bit.ly/NF\\_ProjectOn-Track](https://bit.ly/NF_ProjectOn-Track)







**INCREASING ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY STEM EXPERIENCES SINCE 2020**

**STEM Learning Design (STEM.LD)** connects schools to a variety of partnered programs that provide out-of-school time activities and advanced coursework to students and high-quality professional development to educators.



**2023 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS**

- STEM.LD served nearly **20,000 students** and **hundreds of educators** from **17 districts**.
- Over 125 educators attended STEM.LD's first annual summer institute.



**20,000**  
**STUDENTS**  
served  
in 2023



**99%**  
**OF STEM.LD EDUCATORS**  
completed high-quality  
professional development



**125+**  
**EDUCATORS**  
attended the STEM.LD  
Summer Institute

**WHAT WE DO**

**FOR SCHOOLS**

**FOR STUDENTS**

**STEM.LD PARTNERS**

**STEM.LD provides**

- on-going, high quality professional development
- support for curriculum development
- additional certifications in areas like Algebra and AP STEM courses
- externships in local industries and support for workforce partnerships

**STEM.LD provides**

- engaging, career-focused STEM experiences
- virtual and in-person STEM activities
- advanced STEM coursework



## STEM.LD HOSTS FIRST ANNUAL SUMMER INSTITUTE

STEM.LD hosted its first annual **Summer Institute** on June 22, 2023 at Greeneville High School. Over 125 educators from across the region spent the day learning about high-quality, engaging STEM instruction and student activities.

Several local and national partner organizations shared innovative instructional strategies and hands-on learning activities with attendees. These organizations included East Tennessee State University, Walters State Community College, University of Alabama in Huntsville, Purdue University, the Center for Excellence in STEM Education at ETSU, STEM Education Works, TNTP, and BioBuilder.

Teacher Kim Casteel attended BioBuilder's synthetic biology session twice to be able to confidently implement the activity in her classroom at North Greene High School. She said, "I love that this session allowed participants to fill the roles of students to perform a new, higher order lab centered around emergent biotechnology."



Teachers and leaders learned together at the STEM.LD Summer Institute. Top Row: (l) Educators listen to Olivia Kuhens, a teacher from Anderson County, share her externship experience. (r) Teachers learn how to program smart planters using micro:bits. Bottom Row: (l) An educator participates in the "Fancy Cup vs. Plain Cup" challenge using phenomenon-based learning. (r) Kristen Riley shares the makerspace activities housed in Bulls Gap School's library.



### TRANSFORMATIVE SCIENCE INSTRUCTION

Jerry Graham and Grace McKinney, both STEM.LD participants and sixth grade science teachers at Greeneville Middle School, shared what they had learned about phenomenon-based instruction with other educators at the Summer Institute. This type of instruction is student-centered, encouraging them to actively learn through observation before jumping into new concepts. McKinney says it has completely transformed her classroom because "it allows students to grasp difficult concepts in fun ways that are meaningful and lasting."

Graham will present this session to educators from across the country at the National Science Teachers Association's Annual Conference in March 2024.

### PROGRAM STAFF



**Dr. Vicki Kirk**  
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**Breshay Helton**, Implementation Coordinator  
**Law Loving**, Workforce Coordinator  
**Brittany Seybert**, Implementation Coordinator  
**Dr. Ramona Williams**, Implementation Coordinator

LEARN MORE



 [bit.ly/NF\\_STEMLD](https://bit.ly/NF_STEMLD)



TENNESSEE  
AP ACCESS FOR  
**ALL**

SERVING GRADES 9-12 IN PARTNERING  
TENNESSEE SCHOOLS SINCE 2021

The AP Access for ALL (APAA) program is a partnership between the Tennessee Department of Education and Niswonger Foundation. The Niswonger Foundation's extensive history in virtual instruction through Niswonger Online serves as a valuable foundation for this online supplemental program.

## 2023 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Over **2,400 students** from **226 schools** across Tennessee enrolled in APAA courses during the 2022-2023 academic year.
- APAA students earned 50% more high school AP credits from year 1 to year 2.



**2,410**

APAA STUDENT  
ENROLLMENT



**84%**

APAA COURSE  
PASS RATE



**18:1**

STUDENT TO  
TEACHER RATIO

## WHAT WE DO

FOR  
SCHOOLS

### APAA provides

- Advanced professional development for current AP teachers
- AP training and support for future AP teachers
- Opportunities to apply for AP classroom mini-grants

FOR  
STUDENTS

### APAA provides

- Free virtual AP courses and educational resources
- Individualized support from licensed Tennessee teachers
- The opportunity for AP course testing

My favorite part about teaching for APAA is the amazing students. I love watching them grow, and I get a smile on my face whenever they start to relate what they are learning in class to things they do in the real world.



Anthony Todd  
Sullivan East High School



## TWO YEARS OF APAA

In the program's first two years,

- **student participation** has increased substantially, with over 3,000 students completing APAA courses.
- AP qualifying scores grew by 65%, giving students potential **college savings** of over \$1.2 million.
- **empowered educators** have participated in APAA professional development in record numbers. APAA approved 1,241 AP Summer Institute scholarships, awarded 219 AP mini grants, and trained and hired 115 teachers to teach APAA courses.

**2,629**

**AP  
EXAMS**

**\$1.2M**

**COLLEGE  
SAVINGS**

**228**

**HIGH  
SCHOOLS**



## APAA STAFF



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Assistant Director of Curriculum & Teaching

### **Jill Jaynes**

Assistant Director of Regional Relationship Specialists

### **Chris Dotson**

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### **Taylor Campbell**

Coordinator of Finance

### **Wendi Kasting**

Coordinator of Data, Media, & Website

### **Karen Fine**

Coordinator of Teacher and Course Evaluations

### **Angela Taylor**

Coordinator of AP Cohorts

### **Tammy Wolfe**

Lead AP Liaison

### **Tiffany Dalton**

Technical Support Assistant

### **Janet Graham**

Regional Relationship Specialist

### **Donna Smith**

Regional Relationship Specialist

### **Lisa Brewer**

Regional Relationship Specialist

## NISWONGER ONLINE STAFF



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**Dr. Catherine Edwards**  
Supervisor of Student Success

**Niswonger Online**



**LEARN MORE**



## NISWONGER ONLINE

**2,531 Students | 59 Teachers | 46 Schools | 27 Districts**

Niswonger Online offers over 50 General Education courses, providing students across the state access to a wide variety of classes that may not be available at their home high school. Since the summer of 2014, **16,376 credits** have been earned through Niswonger Online courses. In 2023, several new courses were developed to give students access to even more choices as they build their schedules in 2024. Additionally, Niswonger Online continues to provide support for schools experiencing teacher shortages, particularly in world languages, math, and science.

**LEARN MORE**



[tnapaccessforall.org](http://tnapaccessforall.org)





## A WORKFORCE READINESS PROGRAM FOR GRADES 10-12

**CareerConnect** is a workforce education and career-readiness program offered by the Niswonger Foundation in partnership with local education agencies and industries. Participants, known as Explorers, begin their CareerConnect journey in 10th grade and continue through 12th grade. CareerConnect students explore career paths, develop “soft” or “essential” skills, earn work ethic distinction, and gain real-world work experience.



## 2023 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- CareerConnect served over **400 students** in **23 schools**.
- CareerConnect hosted the "Be Pro Be Proud" career simulation truck in Greeneville, Morristown, Washington County, and Kingsport to give students hands-on learning experience in many different careers, including construction, CDL truck driving, and journeyman/lineman electrical.
- CareerConnect is offering "Career Safe" for students to earn an employability skills certification. Once students complete one module, they will earn a micro-credential. When students complete all 11 modules, they will earn the employability certification, which also counts as an Early Post-Secondary Opportunity (EPSO) in their school district.

## WHAT WE DO

### FOR STUDENTS

### EXPLORERS PROGRAM

#### CareerConnect provides

- career exploration opportunities
- soft skill development
- workforce readiness credentialing
- real-world work experiences

Students apply for the **CareerConnect Explorers** program with the help of their guidance counselors. Students selected for the program attend CareerConnect meetings as well as a summer experience, complete all assignments, and remain in good academic and disciplinary standing.

*CareerConnect is preparing me  
for the future...and it's fun!*

**Nathaniel M.**  
South Greene High School





## PATHS TO SUCCESS

In early 2023, Scott Niswonger welcomed a group of CareerConnect Explorers to the Niswonger Foundation for a roundtable discussion with Marlin White, President of Chasan Industrial Complex in Greeneville and longtime contributor to CareerConnect.

The two businessmen shared the experiences that put them on the path to success and gave students their best advice, including learning from mistakes, taking risks, seeking mentors and effective role models, and not being afraid of hard work. Students were encouraged to ask questions and share their own thoughts and experiences during the roundtable.



## CAREERCONNECT HIGHLIGHTED IN U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RESEARCH

CareerConnect was highlighted as one of the most innovative rural career pathway programs in the nation in a recent white paper published by AnLar and the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education in March 2023. The paper, titled "Understanding Flexible Rural Career Pathways," noted the success and replicability of the program's hands-on career exploration and industry access components.



## PROGRAM STAFF



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**Kim Gass**  
Regional Coordinator  
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## WORK ETHIC DISTINCTION

Work Ethic Distinction (WED) is a workforce readiness credential that can be earned by high school seniors in participating counties. Students who earn the WED will be given preference for job interviews at partnering employers if they meet all other qualifications of the job posting.



Career-ready graduates are guaranteed an interview with 200+ companies in Tennessee.



Graduates are designated a Tri-Star Scholar and recognized at their high school graduation.



## LEARN MORE



[bit.ly/NF\\_CareerConnect](https://bit.ly/NF_CareerConnect)



# NISWONGER SCHOLARSHIP & LEADERSHIP PROGRAM



The Niswonger Leadership and Scholarship Program is highly respected for its focus on providing leadership development and educational support in exchange for a contractual commitment to live, work, and serve in Northeast Tennessee. The Scholars participate in Winter and Summer Leadership Institutes, complete volunteer service, journal, pursue internships, study abroad, and engage in campus leadership opportunities, all with a focus on the applicability of what they are learning to the future of the First Congressional district of Tennessee. They are committed to building a more promising future for the region they call home.

“ Any concerns I have about the challenges of our region quickly disappear when I spend time with our Niswonger Scholars. They are the pieces to the puzzle and hope for our future. They truly are blessings in my life.

DR. NANCY DISHNER, PROGRAM DIRECTOR



As I consider how my life and my work fit into the puzzle, I am reminded of the poignant words of Mahatma Ghandi: “The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.” My goal is to follow this example. Being able to help people who watched you grow is so fulfilling - there is a full circle emotion that makes one feel complete.

**GUSTAVO CASTILLO**  
College of Charleston  
Exercise Science



Puzzles are a great way to look at the fabric of a community, and I hope to fulfill my role in Northeast Tennessee by not only finding my place but helping others to find theirs, as well. We can't expect our community to improve if we do not expect ourselves to do the same.

**TRENTON DICKERSON**  
University of Tennessee-Knoxville  
Industrial & Systems Engineering



As a Niswonger Scholar, I have been equipped to contribute meaningfully to my classroom, colleagues, and community-ensuring that every interaction and impact I have in Northeast Tennessee speaks to the Foundation's mission of progress and prosperity for our region. Fitting perfectly together like a puzzle, each Scholar serves as an integral piece of the work and mission.

**DEREK DRISKILL**  
Carson-Newman University  
Education-English, Science, & Mathematics

To live and grow in Northeast Tennessee has been my great pleasure - to help provide that experience to the next generation of Northeast Tennesseans will be my great honor. It is for that reason that I am grateful that our Scholars program is putting the pieces of the puzzle together for our region's future. I am honored to take my first steps as a professional and community leader with the Foundation's guidance.



**SAMUEL HENSLEY**

East Tennessee State University  
 Education-History, Science, & Mathematics



Success isn't just about finding the pieces; it's about knowing where they fit and having the courage to put them in place. I have learned that what you do is only as impactful as why you are doing it. The Niswonger Scholars program has taught me something even more important: how to see my community, understand their struggles and joys, and do something about it.

**MACY NOE**

Vanderbilt University  
 Chemical Engineering

Like a puzzle, we are all small pieces to the larger picture of our communities. To prepare to serve our region, I treat every opportunity given to me as a gift. When I return, I hope to find my place in connecting those around me to my community's greater picture.



**MABEL OLSON**

Tennessee Technological University  
 Electrical Engineering



**JOHN TURNER**  
 Director of Business Attraction  
 Knoxville Chamber of Commerce



**MAKAYLA DAVIS**  
 NiswongerCARE Advisor  
 Niswonger Foundation



**ERICA SEAL**  
 Graduate Student  
 East Tennessee State University

**AISLING HAGAN**  
 Graduate Student  
 University of Tennessee-Knoxville

## 2023 NISWONGER SCHOLAR GRADUATES

## PROGRAM DIRECTORS



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## **NISWONGER FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**SCOTT M. NISWONGER**  
Chairman and Founder

**DR. NANCY DISHNER**  
President and CEO

**NIKKI NISWONGER**  
Board Secretary

**DAVID A. GOLDEN**  
CEO, ETSU Research Corporation (Board Member)

**ALAN LEVINE**  
Executive Chairman, President and CEO, Ballad Health (Board Member)

**JOHN TWEED**  
Retired Executive Director, Landair and Covenant Logistics (Board Member)

**KATHY O'DELL**  
Board Treasurer

## **NISWONGER FOUNDATION STAFF**

**DR. NANCY DISHNER**  
President and CEO

**DR. RICHARD KITZMILLER**  
Vice President

**KATHY O'DELL**  
Financial Manager

**BARBARA BATES**  
Associate Director, Leadership and Scholarship

**ROBIN SHEPHERD**  
Mr. Niswonger's CFO

**ANGIE BAILEY**  
Receptionist

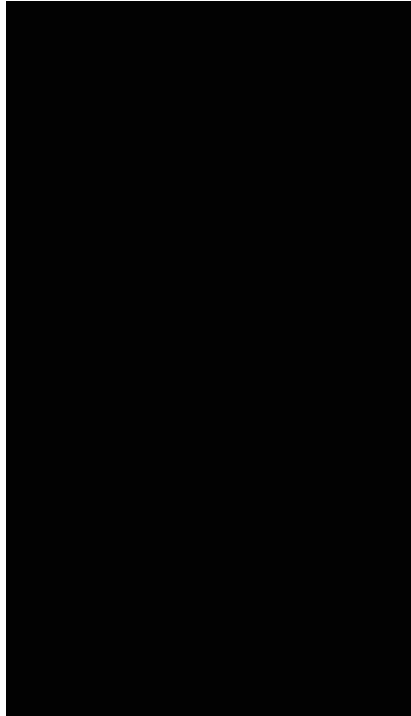
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