



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

National STEM Scholar Class Announced for 2017

***Ten Middle School Science Teachers from Eight States Participated
in Unique Professional Development Program***

LOUISVILLE, KY (July 31, 2017) – Ten middle school science teachers from eight states across the country have participated in the prestigious [National STEM Scholar Program](#), a unique professional development and networking program to provide advanced training for the teachers of aspiring middle school scientists nationwide.

In 2016, the [National Stem Cell Foundation](#) partnered with the [The Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science in Kentucky](#) at Western Kentucky University to fund competitive scholarships for science teachers motivating students at the tipping point of life-long science interest – middle school. By “training the trainers,” the program seeks to inspire the next generation of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) innovators and pioneers.

The 2017 National STEM Scholar class was hosted by The Gatton Academy from June 4 - 10, 2017 at Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, Kentucky. This year’s National STEM Scholars were selected from applicants in 25 states and included:

- Suzanne Banas, Miami, Florida - South Miami Middle Community School
- Kiki Contreras, Shoreline, Washington – The Evergreen School
- Katie Donlin, Byron, Minnesota – Byron Middle School
- Angela Gospodarek, Gorham, Maine – Gorham Middle School
- Jay Hollis, Bowling Green, Kentucky – Bowling Junior High School
- John Lui, Dousman, Wisconsin - Kettle Moraine Middle School
- Emily McKernan, Brushton, New York - Brushton-Moira Central School
- Valerie Pumala, Cameron, Wisconsin - Cameron Middle School
- Donna Shartzter, Harned, Kentucky - Breckinridge County Middle School
- Dana Young, Hightstown, New Jersey - Melvin H. Kreps Middle School

According to Dr. Paula Grisanti, National Stem Cell Foundation Chairman, “The STEM Scholar program directly influences middle school science teachers who will interact with students and colleagues for many years to come. Building excitement and opportunity insight for children in this age group has been shown to significantly impact ongoing STEM interest and engagement. Research shows that children in

middle school who become excited about science are the ones who will pursue STEM courses in high school and major in STEM subjects at the college level. Focusing our efforts and resources on reaching this influential group of teachers will bear fruit now and into the future.”

Grisanti added, “The National STEM Scholar experience fosters new ideas and approaches to teaching, expands the experience through peer-to-peer education in the Scholar's home environment, provides a national network of colleagues for career-long interaction and creates access to thought leaders who participate in the program and choose to stay engaged. From its first year, we have seen the potential influence and scale of this collaboration.”

Dr. Julia Link Roberts, Executive Director of The Gatton Academy, commented, “This partnership will accrue benefits for the National STEM Scholars, the middle school teachers with whom they collaborate and the classrooms of middle school students with whom they engage. The National STEM Scholars Program is an excellent way for teachers to learn new strategies for reaching and encouraging student interest and ongoing enthusiasm for math and science.”

During the week-long program, National STEM Scholars engage in hands-on, minds-on science activities; connect with speakers and thought leaders in STEM education; train with skilled science educators and develop a creative Challenge Project for classroom implementation. Each Scholar receives a Chromebook to facilitate ongoing collaboration and a generous stipend for Challenge Project supplies and materials. Mentoring is provided throughout the year by Gatton Academy faculty.

In addition, National STEM Scholars will share midpoint progress with their colleagues while attending the National Science Teacher Association (NSTA) annual March conference. The 2018 NSTA conference will be held March 15-18 in Atlanta.

All expenses, including travel costs, materials, mentoring and Challenge Project supplies are covered by a grant from the National Stem Cell Foundation. The National STEM Scholars Program is in its second year of a five-year grant provided by the National Stem Cell Foundation.

About the National Stem Cell Foundation

The National Stem Cell Foundation (NSCF) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization funding adult stem cell and regenerative medicine research, scholarships for middle school science teachers inspiring the next generation of STEM pioneers and patient advocacy programs with significant reach and impact. For more information, visit www.nationalstemcellfoundation.org.

About The Gatton Academy

Established in 2007, The Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science is Kentucky's first state-supported, residential program for high school students with interests in advanced math and science careers. One of only 15 such programs in the nation, The Academy has been named to *The Washington Post's* list of top-performing schools with elite students for eight consecutive years. For more information, visit www.wku.edu/academy.

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