

Creating Opportunities for Individual and Community Growth through Education and Other Sustainable Projects

NiswongerCARE Takes Center Stage

Sustaining the work of the i3 College and Career Consortium

By Denise Arnold, Director, College and Career Counseling

A lesson learned from the Foundation’s counselors, funded through the i3 Investing in Innovation grant, and the school systems they served, was that post-secondary and career counseling is vital to building and sustaining a college-going and career ready culture, ensuring that students have every opportunity to seek a post-secondary credential.

As the current i3 grant was ending, the Niswonger Foundation and leaders from the consortium schools identified the college and career counselors as a highly effective component they were eager to sustain. Professional counselors have been serving each school to focus exclusively on the essential elements of this program which includes assisting students with post-secondary education choices, creating a career-focused plan with students, supporting the logistics of carrying out students’ plans (including applications, financial aid, campus visits, interpreting correspondence from institutions, and tracking progress), and continual encouragement for high school grads and parents with a summer program that extends services to support recent graduates to their matriculation into post-secondary institutions in the fall.

Without a partner, the Niswonger Foundation and the school systems of Northeast Tennessee would have been unable to sustain the post-secondary and career advisement that was supported through the i3 grant funds. The Niswonger Foundation sought a partner to join in this effort, and received a grant from the Care Foundation of America to sustain this work. This partnership has resulted in a two-year 1.3 million dollar grant. Tom Davenport, Chairman of the Board of the Care Foundation, immediately understood the need for sustaining a focus on post-secondary education, commenting, “Navigating the college or technical school admissions process is not easy, particularly for a first generation college-bound student and his or her family. It is important to provide the opportunity for students to have advisement to assist with questions regarding college and career choices.” Mr. Davenport further stated: “We believe we will produce a model that



NiswongerCARE Advisors and Partners

can be scaled across the State of Tennessee.”

Scott M. Niswonger, Niswonger Foundation Chairman and Founder, stated “We are proud to join with the Care Foundation of America in an effort to ensure that all high school students in Northeast Tennessee hear the message of the importance of preparing themselves for a career that will enrich their lives, support their future families, and sustain their communities.”

NiswongerCARE program was initiated for the 2015-16 school year. This program serves 31 high schools in the First Congressional District and will impact nearly 30,000 high school students. “We honor the successes of our i3 Grant counseling staff and will work to sustain the important momentum they have established in the past five years,” states Niswonger Foundation President and CEO, Dr. Nancy Dishner. “The NiswongerCARE program will combine the skills gained in the i3 grant project with elements of a national model used by the College Advising Corp. With this model, we will work to support and enhance the important work already being accomplished by our region’s high school counselors.”

Based on the experience of the Niswonger Foundation and other successful college advising programs (such as the College Advising Corps³), the new

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Scott M. Niswonger

LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND FOUNDER

We Thought We Could!

It is interesting how childhood memories are brought back to mind in unlikely ways, resembling current events in our adult lives. Recently, the Niswonger Foundation joined in partnership with the Governor’s Books from Birth program, with the goal of developing early literacy skills in children. At a recent press conference at the Niswonger Children’s Hospital, we shared that the Foundation will be providing families with their babies’ first book, “The Little Engine that Could,” at all birthing hospitals throughout the region.

Now, it has been a few years since my mother read that book to me. The theme, however, is well embedded in my memory. A small, but fearless, engine is called upon to perform a near impossible task . Surely, we all remember the rhythmic sound of ... “I think I can. I think I can. I think I

can.”

This newsletter celebrates the completion of the Niswonger Foundation’s \$21 million Investing in Innovation grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The near impossible accomplishments of the Niswonger Foundation over these last five years run a close parallel to that little engine that, against all odds, climbed a towering mountain.

The major successes of this work came into clear focus for me at our last Board meeting. Larry Neas, compliance officer for this grant, provided summary statistics. The grant served 51,862 high school students in

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Center Stage (from cover)

NiswongerCARE program will increase student access to college and career advising. The staffing includes a director, Denise Arnold; two master's prepared counselors, Amy French and Anita Kilbourne-Greer, eight baccalaureate level specialists, and six interns from the graduate counseling programs at Carson-Newman University, East Tennessee State University, and Milligan College. (Please see "Meet the NiswongerCARE Staff" on Page 3).

This innovative staffing model serves more than the purpose of assisting high school students with career and post-secondary education planning. Using a purposeful design of professional counselors, less experienced/near-peer/new professionals, and graduate school interns, the program will function as a training and development opportunity for a new generation of young professionals who will be serving Northeast Tennessee beyond the scope of this grant. For those who will continue in school counseling, they will have gained a wealth of practical experience and professional development opportunities. This is also the most cost-effective program model.

Description of the Advisor Training:

This past July, NiswongerCARE was in full swing when nine recent college graduates were hired as full-time college access advisors, along with a program director and two associate directors. Additionally, through partnerships with East Tennessee State University, Carson-Newman University, and Milligan College, six college access advisors/interns, currently pursuing their master's degrees in counseling, joined the staff.

July and August were spent in training to ensure that Advisors had the knowledge and skills needed to assist students in navigating the college going process. They received intensive training designed to prepare them to help students with the myriad of college going milestones from exploring post-secondary opportunities, navigating the college admissions maze, applying for financial aid, registering and preparing for the ACT, to transitioning to college. Training also focused on the importance of collaborating with counselors, teachers and administrators to promote a college-going culture into the life of the school.

Because it is important to help students choose the college or program that is the right fit for them, training also included college visits to all of the public and private post-secondary institutions in our region. Advisors toured each campus and met with representatives who provided detailed information about their institution. Advisors left with first-hand knowledge regarding majors and programs, cost, application deadlines, and available financial aid and scholarships.

15 school systems, and 30 high schools, in Northeast Tennessee. We learned many impressive numbers at that meeting. For example, an average of \$337.99, per student, was invested to improve educational opportunity. Three hundred eighty four teachers were trained to become Advanced Placement (AP) instructors. We invested over \$1.1 million dollars in professional development for teachers. Funds were invested in areas such as college and career counseling, and specialists to address target areas of online instruction, dual enrollment and distance learning. Countless classrooms were equipped with "state of the art" technology to ensure that students are gaining the knowledge needed for college success. Science and robotics laboratories were created so students could envision "real world" job demands.

Among the other impressive numbers, there are now 48 online courses to ensure that, regardless of the size or location of a high school, students have the opportunity to select from an impressive array of rigorous courses. As an example, no longer is one foreign language the only option. Students have four foreign languages at their fingertips. When this grant began, only a handful of these 30 high schools provided an opportunity for AP courses. Now, 90% of these high schools have AP onsite. Importantly, 100% of students in our schools have AP available through the online course inventory. The 100% availability of AP courses in the Niswonger Consortium schools compares to 48% across the State of Tennessee.

With Tennessee, and the nation, focusing on post-secondary and career readiness, college and career counselors became a "point of pride" in the accomplishments of this grant. Nine counselors tirelessly served these 30 high

Not only did the advisors have the benefit of learning from the extensive counseling and college advising experience of the program director and associate directors, but they were also provided the opportunity to interact with several other experts in the field. Erica Adams, a representative from Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation, provided a comprehensive overview of state and federal financial aid including TN Promise and HOPE Scholarships. Current school counselors also shared insights and skills on how to engage students and parents in the college going process. NiswongerCARE Advisor, Joe Story shared, "When John Greer (Bristol City School Counselor) came and spoke to us a few weeks ago, he really opened my eyes about all the situations we will encounter.

Advisors were further engaged through a virtual community where they were encouraged to discuss various training topics, as well as make regular blog posts about their training experience. This platform was also utilized for their participation in a book study on "A Framework for Understanding Poverty" and how it impacts students and their families. This platform continues to provide advisors with a way to share creative approaches they have discovered to reach and connect with students, as well as many other best practices and publications they have created. With training completed, September 1, 2015 marked the first day that Advisors reported to their assigned schools. Advisors serve in each of the 31 high schools from one to three days per week dependent upon student population and counselor to student ratio. When the first "boots on the ground" day was approaching, advisors expressed a great deal of excitement about meeting their students. This sentiment was expressed by NiswongerCARE Advisor/Milligan College Intern, Kaitlin Norton: "I am so eager to get into my schools and work with the kids. I think I have a big challenge ahead of me, but I am up for the hard days because I know in the end, we as a team, will be making a difference in East Tennessee. My philosophy has always been that if I can change one person's life, I have forever changed the world."



Dr. Nancy Dishner, Tom Davenport and Dr. Wilsie Bishop

schools. They supplemented the work of the school counselor, by assisting the students and their families with campus visits, completion of college applications, assistance with financial aid applications, career exploration, college selection, and, importantly, providing encouragement to many first generation college students.

But, if you will recall the story of "The Little Engine that Could," you remember that it doesn't end on the top of the mountain. As the end of our journey with the grant was approaching, our staff was committed to ensuring that the hard work would survive past the grant's funding. An impressive sustainability plan was developed and, systematically, partners were identified to ensure that the important work of this project would live on.

Much of this sustainability plan you will read about in this newsletter. With partners like the Care Foundation of America, who stepped up to provide the funding for the NiswongerCARE program that will continue the work of college and career advising, to our Niswonger Consortium school systems, who are investing resources to continue the online course opportunities. It was my pleasure to support staff in this plan by personally investing additional resources to allow the professional development opportunities to continue for the educators.

I don't sense an end to this journey, just a new beginning and new opportunities ahead. In fact, I am impressed by a renewed energy in the staff as their actions and enthusiasm remind me of the final words from the little engine... "I thought I could. I thought I could. I thought I could."

Scott M. Niswonger
President

New Niswonger Foundation Board Member Announced



Alan Levine

The Niswonger Foundation welcomes Alan Levine, President and CEO of Mountain States Health Alliance, as a member of the Board of Directors. With 20 years of hospital operations experience, he has served as CEO of hospitals and health systems from the rural north Florida town of Perry to the fifth largest public not-for-profit health system in the nation. Commenting on the appointment, Scott M. Niswonger, Chairman and Founder stated: "Alan is a remarkable asset for the Niswonger Foundation. He brings a wealth of management and leadership skills to the table."

Mr. Levine served on Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal's Cabinet as the secretary of the Department of Health and Hospitals and as Governor Jindal's senior health policy advisor. He also served as the deputy chief of staff and the senior health policy advisor to Florida Governor Jeb Bush prior to his appointment by Governor Bush to serve as the

secretary of Florida's Agency for Health Care Administration, an agency responsible for administering a \$17 billion budget.

He serves on the Board of Governors of the State University System of Florida, the governing body of Florida's 12 state universities. He is Chairman of Audit and Compliance and is a member of the Finance and Building committees. Prior to his service on the Board of Governors, he served on the Board of Trustees of the University of Florida, Florida's flagship research university. He also serves on the Board of Directors of the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy. Niswonger stated: "His longstanding interest in education supports our mission. He will also serve as an important role model for our Niswonger Scholars."

Alan and his wife Laura live in Johnson City, Tennessee. They have two adult children, Terry and Katy.

"Alan is a remarkable asset for the Niswonger Foundation. He brings a wealth of management and leadership skills to the table."

Alumni Scholars Participate in New Scholar Selection

Niswonger Scholar Alumni is Fulfilling the Mission of "Learn, Earn, and Return"



Brittany Vogt Jorgenson



Jason Light



Adam Miller



Kayla Williams West

The Niswonger Foundation's Scholarship and Leadership program is, to our knowledge, a "one of a kind" educational and leadership development opportunity. We take the brightest young leaders in Northeast Tennessee, guide them in attending the college or university that will best prepare them for their chosen career, and supplement that education with four years of leadership development, service-focused activities and personal development opportunities. With a commitment to return to the region, these Scholars will return with not only strong earning potential, but an entrepreneurial spirit and overwhelming desire to return their talents and energy to this region. The goal is that as they complete their educational experiences, they will embody the values most important to the mission of the Foundation: exceptional leadership ability, exemplary personal character, and strong dedication to building community.

To achieve this goal, a rigorous selection process is in place. The current process of selecting the students who will enter this distinguished program in the fall of 2016 is underway. A fundamental aspect of this program's design is that not only will the Scholars return to individually serve this region, but that they will become part of a

solid Alumni Network that will serve Northeast Tennessee. This starts with the Scholar selection process each year. Alumni Scholars form the majority of the selection team membership.

The Niswonger Foundation's Scholarship and Leadership program is, to our knowledge, a "one of a kind" educational and leadership development opportunity.

The Niswonger Foundation extends special thanks to four of our Alumni Scholars who participated in the final selection process for the Niswonger Scholars Class of 2020. These four individuals are among the Alumni who have already returned to Northeast Tennessee to fulfill their commitments of "Learn, Earn and Return." They are asked to identify and select the next Class of Scholars who will follow their examples.

This year's Alumni selection committee members included: Brittany Vogt Jorgenson, business development and marketing manager, Storybrook Farms; Jason Light, engineer, Eastman Chemical Company; Adam Miller, systems analyst, Johnson City Power Board; Kayla Williams West, mental health nurse, Mountain States Health Alliance;

The Niswonger Scholars Class of 2020 will be announced in December.

Niswonger i3 Grant Overview (2010-2015)

Niswonger Foundation celebrates the successes of the five-year i3 Investing in Innovation Grant as it came to a close on September 30, 2015.



Counselors prepare for meeting with Governor Bill Haslam at State Capitol

PROJECT SUMMARY

In 2010, the Niswonger Foundation was awarded a five-year Investing in Innovation (i3) grant in the amount of \$17,751,044 from the U.S. Department of Education, which required twenty percent matching funds. These match funds were provided by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Rural School and Community Trust, J.P. Morgan Foundation, and Niswonger Foundation's Chairman and Founder, Scott M. Niswonger.

Through the i3 Grant, the Niswonger Foundation established a college and career consortium of 15 school districts and 30 secondary schools to serve 27,000 students. The Consortium goals were to (1) ensure all students graduate high school college and career ready, especially students from under-represented populations such as rural; and (2) improve the likelihood that students would successfully enroll in and complete college. The Consortium used six strategies to achieve these goals, (1) to increase the number of Advanced Placement (AP) courses offered; (2) to increase the number of rigorous distance learning courses offered; (3) to increase the number of rigorous online courses available to all consortium secondary students; (4) to increase the number of dual enrollment courses available from post-secondary institutions; (5) develop a Course Review Team to determine the courses needed in AP, online, and distance learning, prioritized by Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) courses, Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses, and upper-level foreign-language courses; and (6) provide additional career and college counseling resources to every secondary student in the consortium.

WHAT THE i3 GRANT MEANT FOR SCHOOLS

Niswonger Online

The Niswonger i3 Grant, in 5 years, allowed students in all 30 consortium high schools to have the opportunity to choose from over 45 online classes. There were 426 enrollments in online classes in 2010/11 and in 2014/15 the enrollment had increased to 3,279, a 670% increase. The online classes afforded students the opportunity of taking summer classes to get ahead in credits, or to make up credits. The students who were getting ahead in credits now had the opportunity to take more AP, upper level foreign language, and dual enrollment classes, while at the same time continuing to participate in band, chorus, ROTC, Career Technical Education (CTE) and other electives. These classes also provided students the skills needed to take online classes at the collegiate level. Because of the overwhelming success and high demand of the online pro-

gram, the Niswonger Foundation in partnership with the consortium schools will sustain the online program.

Distance Learning

Every school in the consortium has distance learning equipment, so all of the consortium students potentially had access to any class taught in the 30 high schools. Distance learning was piloted in some form by all of the schools over the 5 year period. A 47.5% increase in enrollment was recorded. This course delivery format, however, had several barriers. The main barriers for the distance learning classes were district calendars and school bell schedules being different. Although schools and systems aligned calendars and bell schedules, unpredictable weather, like snow and ice, caused some schools to close. Also, seat availability was low in popular classes, or the student's open period did not match the class period. With these barriers, and the low priority ranking of this format by school systems, the Niswonger College and Career Consortium (C3) will not sustain distance learning. However, some school districts will continue distance learning between the schools within their districts utilizing the technology that was put in place.

Advanced Placement

Advanced Placement (AP) classes and AP enrollment grew over the grant



Kristi Johnson, i3 Counselor, assists students with financial aid

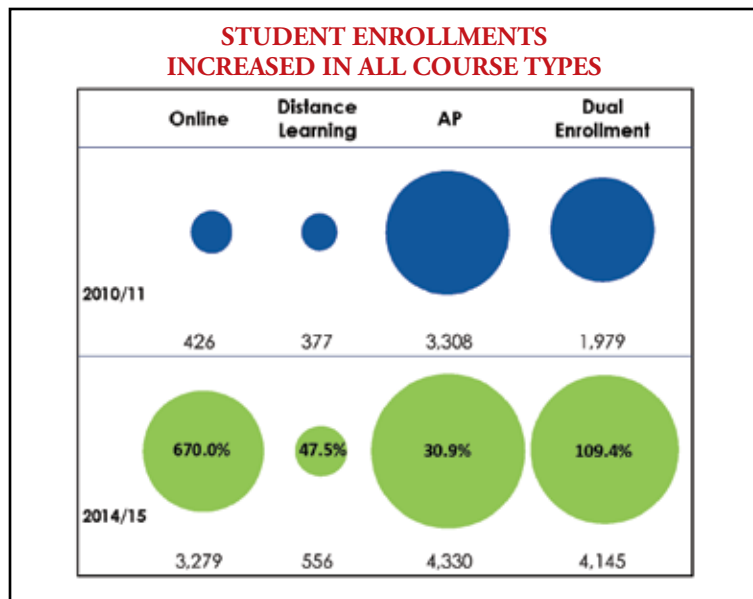
period. Almost 400 teachers in the Niswonger C3 attended AP institutes, and as of the 2015/16 school year, 90% of the consortium schools offer AP classes. Students in the remaining schools have the opportunity to take a variety of AP courses through the online program. This is significant because only 48% of Tennessee high schools offer AP classes. Consortium schools have received approximately \$1.5 million for AP materials needed for new classes, new curriculum needs, and teacher training. The AP class enrollment increased by 30.9% over the grant period, which meant that 1000 more students took AP classes.

Dual Enrollment

Dual Enrollment allows secondary students to earn both high school and college credit while enrolled in a college class. During the 5-year grant, the Niswonger C3 partnered with 7 post-secondary institutions to provide dual enrollment classes. While the Tennessee Dual Enrollment Grant paid \$300 per course, this amount left a balance of approximately \$180 per course for students to pay. This difference is called the gap fee. The i3 Grant paid tuition (gap fees) and textbook costs totaling \$1.6 million, which provided consortium students the opportunity to receive dual enrollment credit. The dual enrollment student count increased 109.4% during the 5-year grant period. This is evidence that the gap fee is a barrier for rural students who need the exposure to and rigor of the college environment to transition into college success. The textbooks purchased were loaned to students at no cost from a textbook library. These textbooks are available for students to assist in sustaining dual enrollment.

Another option created for students in 2013/14 was to participate in the mathematics SAILS (Seamless Alignment and Integrated Learning Support) program. The SAILS program is designed for students who score below 19 on the ACT mathematics test, which would place them in learning support classes prior to college level math classes. In 2014/15 1,339 consortium students enrolled in SAILS math, and 90% of them completed all 5 modules. This means that over 1200 students were eligible to start college level math courses in the fall of 2015.

One of the largest barriers to college success is to be deficient in mathematics skills when entering college. This program assisted students to “sail” into college math ready for success.



(The chart below represents the increases the four strategies that were created and supported by the i3 grant.)

College and Career Counseling

Research confirms that a student is three times more likely to enroll in college if a counselor provides the opportunity for them to visit a college campus and assists them with financial aid information. This is especially true in rural areas. The Niswonger i3 Grant provided nine college and career counselors to assist consortium students in rural northeast Tennessee high schools. This provided opportunities for college visits, individual and group information, and

assistance with financial aid. FAFSA completion increased 10% over the grant period. The i3 counselors were at the schools one to two days per week and assisted with developing the college-going culture, sponsored and helped with college application week, college visits, financial aid meetings, FAFSA completion appointments, support for online courses, individual and group counseling, helping students choose a college and major, and assisting in the transition to the post-secondary environment. Through the i3 grant, the counselors were able to assist the consortium students during the summer, after graduation, with college orientation and transition. The school districts gave high priority to sustaining the college advising aspect of the i3 grant. The Niswonger Foundation in partnership with Care Foundation of America will sustain college advising in the 30 consortium high schools.

Professional Development

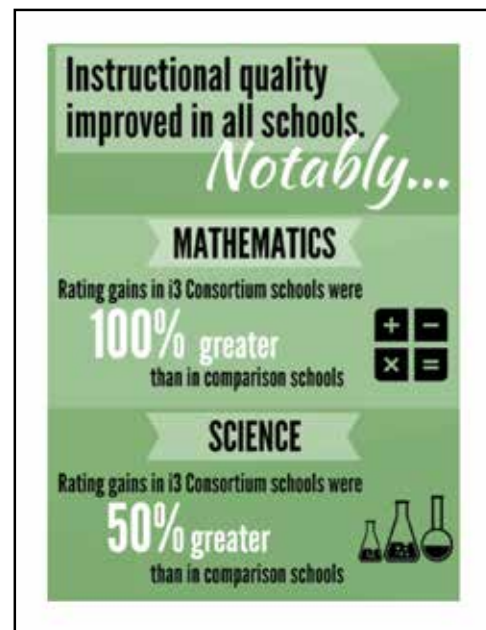
Each of the strategies implemented with i3 grant funds supported training and professional development. Online teachers and school liaisons attended training two to three times per year to teach and implement the online program. The learning resources coordinator led the training as well as provided professional development locally, at the state level, and hosted educators and directors at national online learning conferences. Distance learning teachers were provided professional development and technology to support the distance learning initiatives consortium wide. AP teachers not only attended AP Summer Institutes but they formed and participated in professional development in content specific AP Academies. Professional development was provided through MathElites, STEM Academies, CTE Academies, Counselor Conventions, and Hands-On Days. The annual Niswonger School Success Symposium is available to K-12 educators and was the catalyst for the other summer PD opportunities. In the summer of 2015, the Niswonger Foundation and the i3 Consortium hosted 22 professional development opportunities that were attended by over 1400 educators in northeast Tennessee.

The professional development offered over the 5-year grant period allowed the quality of math and science instruction in the schools to increase significantly more than the comparison schools. (See the chart below).

Conclusion

In the 5-year grant period, one of the most significant outcomes was the formation of a consortium, including the Niswonger Foundation and the school systems in Northeast Tennessee. This meant that no longer did districts, schools, or teachers work alone or in districts only, but there were relationships formed to carry on this work many years after the i3 Grant closed on September 30. So, what did this grant mean for districts, schools, and students? Working relationships were formed to sustain and improve educational opportunities for all students in Northeast Tennessee through online classes, distance learning, AP classes, dual enrollment classes, STEM and CTE classes and college advising.

There are hundreds of anecdotal descriptions of personal successes through the i3 grant period. As an example, one high school had, for the first time in its history, a National Merit Scholar, a Roan Scholar, a Niswonger Scholar and an Embry-Riddle full scholarship in the 2015 graduating class. When asked how they were able to gain these scholarships, each student credited it to the new course opportunities and academic rigor at their high school which was made



Meet the NiswongerCARE Staff College Access Reaches Everyone

by Denise Arnold, Director, College and Career Counseling

The Niswonger Foundation has reason to celebrate as we partner with the Care Foundation of America to form the NiswongerCARE Program (College Access Reaches Everyone). At the heart of the Niswonger Foundation is a commitment to support the schools in Northeast Tennessee as they work to develop a stronger college-going and career ready culture and the expectation for post-secondary education for all students. This new program provides fourteen college access advisors to serve the 31 high schools and approximately 30,000 students in Northeast Tennessee who are members of the Niswonger Foundation's College and Career Consortium. (Please see cover story)

NiswongerCARE Staff



Denise Arnold

Denise Arnold is a native of Johnson County and completed her undergraduate and graduate degrees from East Tennessee State University. In 2010, she earned her Ed.S. in Educational Leadership, with a concentration in Counselor Leadership. Denise brings over 20 years' experience in public education, as well as extensive experience in school counseling. She joined the Niswonger Foundation in 2011 as a College and Career Counselor and then as Director of Learning Resources and Online Coordinator. Denise is director of the NiswongerCARE Program.



Amy French

Amy French is a native of Kingsport and earned a B.A. degree in English/secondary education and a master's degree in counseling from Carson Newman College. She served as an English teacher at Jefferson County High School and as an adjunct instructor at Walters State Community College. She has her own private practice in marriage and family therapy. She is married to Tony French and they have two children, Macy and Courtney. Amy is an Associate Director of the NiswongerCARE Program.



Anita Kilbourne-Greer

Anita Kilbourne-Greer is a native of Gate City, Virginia. She received her B.A. degree in communication arts from Carson Newman College and her M.Ed. degree in counseling from East Tennessee State University. She began her counseling career as a student assistance counselor in the Bristol Tennessee City School System through Frontier Health. She went on to work as an outpatient therapist and, later, as the program coordinator for the Children's Advocacy Center of Sullivan County. She served as a children's minister in Weber City, Virginia before joining the Niswonger 13 counseling team as a college and career counselor in Sullivan County. Anita is an Associate Director of the NiswongerCARE Program.

Advisors



Caroline Baird

Caroline Baird is a native of Rogersville and a graduate of Cherokee High School. She recently earned a B.A. degree in Literature from East Tennessee State University and plans to pursue a master's degree in higher education. She interned at the Kingsport Chamber of Commerce continuing part time after completing the internship. Caroline is a NiswongerCARE Advisor serving Daniel Boone High School and Doby's-Bennett High School.



Allison Eastridge

Allison Eastridge is a native of Johnson City and a graduate of Elizabethton High School. She received a bachelor's degree in Organizational Communications at Middle Tennessee State University. She is a member of the National Society of Leadership and an alumna member of Chi Omega, Zeta Theta Chapter. She worked as an intern at Clear Channel Media and iHeart Radio. Allison is a NiswongerCARE Advisor and serves Johnson County High School and North Greene High School.



Nellie Greer

Nellie Greer is a native of Kingsport and a graduate of Sullivan South High School. She earned a B.S. degree in general psychology and family studies from East Tennessee State University. She has a background in clothing store management. Nellie is a NiswongerCARE Advisor at Morristown East High School and Morristown West High School.



Lucas Hitechew

Lucas Hitechew is a native of Carter County and a graduate of Cloudland High School. He is an East Tennessee State University Roan Scholar. He earned his B.A. degree in international affairs and communication studies. Lucas is serving Hampton High School, Cloudland High School, Unaka High School and Happy Valley High School as a NiswongerCARE Advisor.



Jordan Lovetere

Jordan Lovetere is a native of Knoxville and a graduate of Knoxville Central High School. She earned a B.S. degree in Public Health from East Tennessee State University. She is an alumna member of Kappa Delta Sorority and a member of Tennessee Public Health Association and Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth. She worked as an administrative assistant at Woodridge psychiatric hospital. Jordan is a NiswongerCARE Advisor at Sullivan East High School, Tennessee High School and East Tennessee State University's University School.



Amanda Murr

Amanda Murr is from Maryville, and she earned her B.A. degree in Human Services from East Tennessee State University. She is an alumna member of Alpha Delta Pi, Gamma Phi Chapter and a member of Kappa Delta Pi Educational Honors Society. She volunteers with Relay for Life and completed an internship at Ronald McDonald House. Amanda is a NiswongerCARE Advisor at Sullivan North High School, Sullivan South High School and Greeneville High School.

Advisors



Hannah Norris

Hannah Norris is a native of Kingsport and a graduate of Sullivan North High School. She earned a degree in Sociology and International Studies from East Tennessee State University. She served as a student leader in the International Buccaneer Buddy Program. She has worked as a counselor with an ESL University Prep Program and as an online ESL teacher at Education First. Hannah is a NiswongerCARE Advisor in Hawkins County serving Cherokee High School and Volunteer High School.



Bailey Mays

Bailey Mays is from Clinton, Tennessee and a graduate of Clinton High School. She earned her undergraduate degree from the Cumberland in Kentucky, where she played tennis and was a campus tour guide. She is pursuing an M.S. degree in professional school counseling at Carson Newman University. Bailey serves Jefferson County High School.



Sarah Patton

Sarah Patton is from Johnson City and a graduate of Science Hill High School. She earned a bachelor's degree in Human Services from East Tennessee State University. She interned at Coalition for Kids in Johnson City and enjoys volunteering in her community with First Christian Church. Sarah is a NiswongerCARE Advisor at Science Hill High School and Chuckey-Doak High School.



Claire McCarter

Claire McCarter is a native of Sevierville and a graduate of Sevierville High School. She earned a bachelor's degree in Psychology and Philosophy from the University of Tennessee. She is a candidate in the Counseling and Human Services program at East Tennessee State University. She worked as a research program assistant at Johns Hopkins School of Public Health in the Department of Prevention and Early Childhood Intervention and the Maryland Safe and Supportive Schools Initiative. Claire serves David Crockett High School.



Joe Story

Joe Story is a native of Johnson City and a graduate of Science Hill High School. He earned a B.B.A. degree from East Tennessee State University and is pursuing a Master's of science in Education with School Counseling at University of Tennessee-Martin. Joe's work as an instructional assistant in the CDC classroom at David Crockett High School prepared him for his position as a NiswongerCARE Advisor at Cosby High School, Cocke County High School and West Greene High School.



Kaitlin Norton

Kaitlin Norton is originally from Wisconsin, where she graduated from Brookfield Central High School. She attended Hillsdale College and graduated with honors in Psychology and Business Administration. She served as president of Hillsdale's Psi Chi Chapter and was the founder/president of a mental health awareness club. She gained experience in research from a private research grant she received. She is a recipient of the Elinor Trout Verville Award in Psychology. She is pursuing a master's degree in clinical Mental Health counseling at Milligan College. She plans to become a marriage and family therapist. Kaitlin serves Elizabethton High School.

College Interns and Advisors



Chris Burns

Chris Burns is from Social Circle, Georgia. He earned his B.A. degree in Sports Science from Tusculum College. He is pursuing an M.S. degree in Professional School Counseling at Carson Newman University. Chris is serving at South Greene High School.



Jessica Crosby

Jessica Crosby is from Fayetteville and graduated high school at Riverside Christian Academy. She earned her bachelor's degree in Human Performance and Exercise Science at Milligan College. She is pursuing a master's degree in school counseling at Milligan College. Jessica serves Unicoi County High School.



Kevin Hyatt

Kevin Hyatt is a native of Sneedville, TN, and graduated valedictorian of his high school class. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Social Sciences and a Masters in Clinical Psychology from East Tennessee State University. He is now a candidate in the ETSU school counseling program. Throughout his education Kevin has gained experience working with children and adolescents. He will serve as the advisor at Hancock County High School.

Advisors are now actively engaged in serving students in their schools. They quickly became acclimated to the fast pace of the school counseling office. As an early focus, NiswongerCARE Advisors worked alongside the school counselors to ensure that all seniors were signed up for TN Promise by the November 2 deadline.

With college just around the corner, those seniors needing intensive time and assistance in navigating the "college going" process are being referred to NiswongerCARE Advisors to help them explore post-secondary programs, register for placement tests, such as the ACT, apply to colleges, search for scholarships, and provide the encouragement needed for students to see their best path to post-secondary education.

2015 Niswonger Foundation School Success Symposium

Record Crowd Focuses on Personalizing Learning

Nearly 1000 educators participated in the Ninth Annual School Success Symposium on Thursday, July 9, held at the Niswonger Performing Arts Center and Greeneville High School. Educators were in attendance from 17 school systems in Northeast Tennessee. The theme of the Symposium was personalizing learning to meet the individual needs of each student.

"Her comments focused on personalizing instruction to meet the specific needs of students in rural school settings."

Scott M. Niswonger provided the welcome to the record-setting crowd, and introduced Tennessee Commissioner of Education, Dr. Candice McQueen, as the opening speaker. Commissioner McQueen began her remarks by stating that, at the Tennessee Department of Education, "all means all." This personalized approach to meeting the needs of every child was one of five priorities outlined by the Commissioner, who noted that 55% of students in Tennessee are considered economically disadvantaged. Other priorities included focusing on early childhood development, professional development for educators, supporting school districts, and post-secondary and career readiness.

Additionally, Commissioner McQueen spoke of the need for a statewide focus on improving literacy skills and providing students with "real world" experiences. The educators in attendance were among the first to be introduced to the "digital dashboard," an online record-keeping system to allow teachers to track data and progress, individually, for every child.

Deputy Commissioner of Education and Chief Academic Officer for the Tennessee Department of Education, Dr. Vicki Kirk, brought the concept of personalizing learning to a district-level discussion. As former Director of Schools for Greene County, Tennessee, Dr. Kirk is familiar with particular challenges faced by the Niswonger Consortium schools. Her comments focused on personalizing instruction to meet the specific needs of students in rural school settings.

David Golden, Senior Vice President, Chief Legal Officer, and Corporate Secretary for Eastman Chemical Company, focused his comments on personalizing the learning process to better prepare students for careers.



Dr. McQueen speaks at Symposium

The job skills needed for future success in the workplace are not just a job credential, like engineer or technician. What is more important is that employees are able to adapt to a changing work environment. He stated that employers desire workers of the future who are highly motivated, creative thinkers, ready and willing to keep their company on a positive trajectory. He encouraged the educators to provide every

opportunity possible for students to be exposed to internships, shadowing, career exploration and, simply, dreaming big dreams for their future.

The keynote speaker was Michael Horn, from the Clayton Christensen Institute. Mr. Horn is a nationally recognized authority on personalized learning. He educates policymakers and community leaders regarding the power of "disruptive innovation," in the

K-12 and higher education spheres, through their research and design of practical classroom applications. He has co-authored two books on this subject: "Blended" and "Disrupting Class." The capstone of his message was the need to educate every student successfully and enabling each to realize his or her fullest potential. In addition to the keynote address, Mr. Horn joined the region's school administrators for a more in-depth discussion of implementing personalized learning in school systems.

"...designed for teachers to more fully develop their skills with personalized and blended learning techniques adaptable to their classrooms."

more fully develop their skills with personalized and blended learning techniques adaptable to their classrooms.



Michael Horn

Eastman Chemical Company joined the Niswonger Foundation to provide support for this year's Symposium by sponsoring Mr. Horn's presentation.

Following lunch, the educators were able to choose from more than 40 break-out sessions designed to share best practices in personalized learning in K-12 schools. These sessions were facilitated by teachers, school leaders, and community specialists from Northeast Tennessee.

Following the Symposium, educators were offered the opportunity to participate in subject and interest area specific "hands on" professional development days. These professional development opportunities were specially designed for teachers to

Highlighting Recent Partnerships and Grants

Young Peoples Concert

Introduces Students to an Educationally Based Symphony Orchestra Experience

More than 2000 students from Northeast Tennessee elementary schools attended two performances of the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra's "Young People's Concert" at the Niswonger Performing Arts Center, in Greeneville, on Tuesday, November 3. Sponsored by the Niswonger Foundation, the primary goal of this annual program is to provide the opportunity for children to see a quality orchestral performance. Each year, the concerts are specially designed as a teaching/learning experience. The Niswonger Foundation supports the belief that developing an appreciation for the arts is an important aspect of becoming an educated person.

The theme for the 2015 program was "Picture This!" Designed for students in grades 3-5, these performances explored the connection between music and visual arts using Ravel's orchestration of Mussorgsky's "Pictures at an Exhibition"



as the anchor piece. The program related music to the art movements of impressionism, cubism and the progression of classical art to "moving pictures." Curriculum materials, including CD's and lesson plans, were provided to teachers in advance of the concert so students could be prepared for the concepts introduced during the live concert experience.

Special guest appearances at this year's concerts included vocal solos by two local teachers - Carla Renner, fourth grade teacher at Tusculum View Elementary and Jody Carter, music teacher at Doak Elementary. The orchestra was under the direction of Maestro James Fellenbaum, Resident Conductor.



Niswonger Shares His Favorite Children's Book

that Could," as an incentive to begin reading aloud with their children begin-

Governor's Books from Birth Partnership

Niswonger Foundation to Provide First Books to Region's Newborn's

Niswonger Foundation has joined forces with the Governor's Books from Birth program to increase early enrollment of Northeast Tennessee children in Dolly Parton's Imagination Library program. Working with regional "birthing hospitals," parents who enroll newborns before leaving the hospital will be given the first book, "The Little Engine

'...his favorite children's book, "Grandpa Bunny..."'

ning at birth, an activity proven to support early literacy. Once enrolled in this program, the child will continue to receive a book each month until the age of five (60 books total).

This "birthing hospital initiative" will begin with three Mountain State Health Alliance hospitals - Indian Path, Franklin Woods, and Niswonger Children's Hospital. In 2014, more than 3200 deliveries were performed in these three hospitals. The goal is that this program will support over 6000 new births, each year, throughout the region. While all families will benefit from this program,

the greatest support will be to families who may struggle to complete the program application or are less likely to learn of the existence of the program.

"The Foundation is proud to join this partnership to inspire families to read to their children. The earlier children are introduced to books and stories, the greater the likelihood that they will develop the literacy skills that can lead to their success in school," states Niswonger Foundation Chairman and Founder, Scott M. Niswonger. At a press conference announcing this partnership on October 21, at Niswonger Children's Hospital, Mr. Niswonger brought along his favorite children's book, "Grandpa Bunny," sharing that this was the first book he remembers being read to him by his mother.

Tennessee Court of Criminal Appeals

Students See State Judicial System in Action

"...hosted the second "real life civics lesson" to over 1200 high school and college students from the region."

In November, the Niswonger Foundation, in partnership with the judges from Tennessee's Third Judicial District, hosted the second "real life civics lesson" to over 1200 high school and college students from the region. In 2014, the Foundation hosted the Tennessee Supreme Court at the Niswonger Performing Arts Center. On November 10, 2015 students had the opportunity to hear four cases before the Tennessee Court of Criminal Appeals, at NPAC. Prior to the event, participating classes

were provided information regarding the cases that would be heard during the event, information on the criminal justice process, and an overview of the Tennessee judicial system. The local bar associations provided volunteer attorneys to spend at least one class period preparing the students for the day's events. High school students from public and private schools, home school associations; and students from colleges of applied technology, community colleges, and private colleges were in attendance.

On the evening prior to the event, Scott M. Niswonger hosted a reception for the local judiciary, educational leaders, and local bar association members at the General Morgan Inn. A private dinner for the members of the Criminal Court of Appeals was also provided.



Judges and Attorneys Address Questions From Students



OUR MISSION:

To create opportunities for individual and community growth through education and other sustainable projects.

For more information regarding our Foundation, contact:

Niswonger Foundation
Tusculum College
P.O. Box 5112
Greeneville, TN 37743
423.798.7837
www.niswongerfoundation.org

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Office Manager

Barbara Bates
Executive Assistant

Niswonger Scholars Shine



SAM BRASHEARS

(Wake Forest University, Junior) is working in the lab of Dr. Daniel Kim-Shapiro, where he will continue his research and develop findings for an article he plans to present in 2016. He presented his work entitled "Evaluating the

Existence of an Intermediate in the Nitrite-Hemoglobin Reaction" to the Wake Forest community. Sam has also been selected as range master of the archery club, at Wake Forest.



MATTHEW GRIMM

(University of Tennessee, Junior) presented his research results from a summer internship to the QCOM 2015 Summer Undergraduate Research Forum Capstone Event at East Tennessee State University.



DUSTIN HOWSER

(Vanderbilt University, Junior) completed a summer internship at Domtar Corporation in King-sport. He has begun a research position in the Biomechanics and Assistive Technology lab at Vanderbilt. His first project is

designing a lower-limb human exo-skeleton for sit-to-stand assistance



IVORY SHELTON

(Wake Forest University, Senior) was elected President of Alpha Epsilon Delta Pre-Medical Honor Society. She was awarded membership in Theta Alpha Kappa Religious Studies Honors Society. She received the William

L. and Ruth C. Rudd Scholarship for 2015-2016. She earned second place at the National HOSA (Health Occupations Students of America) Conference in Anaheim, California for the Transcultural Healthcare Knowledge Test event. She has been admitted to medical school at Wake Forest University for Fall 2016.



MATTHEW SHEPPARD

(Clemson University, Senior) has been accepted to a Summer 2016 Internship in Government Affairs at Eastman Chemical Company.



DILLAN SHULTS

(Tennessee Technological University, Sophomore) became a brother of the Theta Tau chapter of Phi Gamma Delta Sorority. He completed a summer internship at Jarden Zinc.



MORGAN THOMAS

(Clemson University, Freshman) is now a member of Alpha Chi Omega Sorority.



RICHARD VRADEN BURGH

(Tennessee Technological University, Senior) will be giving a poster presentation of his summer research at University of Tennessee-Chattanooga in probability theory at the joint Mathematics Meetings in Seattle, Washington, in January.



ZACHARY WARD

(University of Tennessee, Freshman) was selected as President of Reese Hall Residence Association. He is a member of Alpha Epsilon Delta, Health Professional Honor Society, and he is an active member of "Vols for Christ."

WITH APPRECIATION TO RECENT CONTRIBUTORS TO OUR WORK

The following individuals and organizations have recently provided contributions to assist the Niswonger Foundation in expanding our educational programs and activities.

Bob Book

Neil Book

Brotherton Foundation

Care Foundation of America

Eastman Chemical Company

Kingsport Chamber Foundation (Accel Now)

Dr. and Mrs. Brian Noland

John Abe and Vickie Teague

Our Consortium School Systems

Alumni Scholar News



DR. KATIE BAKER
(Class of 2007)

is a Co-Investigator on a \$3.3 million grant from the National Cancer Institute awarded to develop and implement a social media campaign focused on mother-daughter health communication. She has been selected to present at the 3rd International Conference on UV and Skin Cancer Prevention in Melbourne, Australia later this year. Katie is the recipient of the Tri Cities Business Journal's 2015 "40 Under Forty" award.



MATTHEW BIBLE

(Class of 2011) has earned a new job title of Chemical Engineer in Polymers Manufacturing Department at Eastman Chemical.



NICK DARNELL

(Class of 2006) is one of 18 teachers selected to Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam's first Teacher Cabinet. These teachers will meet with Governor Haslam and Commissioner Candice McQueen quarterly to advise

them on education policy.



LUCAS DELOACH

(Class of 2010) is accepted a position of associate with the law firm of Littler Mendelson in Atlanta, Georgia.



JAMES DURHAM

(Class of 2013) has accepted a new position with State Farm Insurance in San Diego, California.



CASEY JACKSON FRANTZ

(Class of 2008) and her husband Jared proudly announced the birth of quadruplet boys, Aiden, Landon, Parker and Mason.



JORDAN FRYE
(Class of 2015)

is pursuing a master's degree in Social Work at the University of Tennessee. She is completing her concentration practicum with the City of Knoxville.



DR. MORGAN KRAPP
(Class of 2006)

completed her residency at Drexel University/Hahnemann Hospital. She has joined the practice of Advocare Burlington County OB/Gyn in New Jersey.



EMILY HOLLINGSWORTH

(Class of 2011) has been promoted to Community Engagement Manager at Emma, Inc.



JORDAN KIM
(Class of 2012)

is preparing for an Internal Medicine Residency as he completes his medical school education at East Tennessee State University.



JESSICA VERRAN-LINGARD
(Class of 2010)

graduated from Stanford Law School with a dual J.D./M.B.A. She has accepted a position as Corporate and Securities Associate at

Jackson Walker, LLP

SEAN MCCULLOUGH

(Class of 2011) has been promoted to Associate Manager for the Nielsen Innovation Practice (formerly Nielsen BASES) in Chicago, Illinois.



RACHEL MIXON

(Class of 2011) has accepted a new position with ELSA, a manufacturing company in Indiana.



NATALIE NEAS COLEMAN
(Class of 2009)

has been selected as one of 30 "Hope Street Group Tennessee Teacher Fellows." She will collect and share feedback on educational

policy to the Tennessee Department of Education.



TREY RELIFORD

(Class of 2010) graduated from Stanford University with Pro Bono Distinction. Trey accepted a position as an associate with Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton, and

Garrison, LLP in New York until August 2016, when he will begin a position as law clerk for the Honorable Jeffrey S. Bivins of the Tennessee Supreme Court. Trey passed the New York Bar Exam.



LILLIE SEAL

(Class of 2015) accepted a position at Northwest Elementary School in Cocke County as 7th and 8th grade English/Language Arts teacher.



BRANDI RICKER SHELNUTT

(Class of 2008) and her husband Jeremy proudly announce the birth of their daughter, Eleanor. Brandi was recognized by the board of education for having the

number one chemistry scores in achievement in the state of Tennessee. Brandi teaches chemistry at Greeneville High School.



ALEX SMYTH
(Class of 2015)

accepted a position at West Greene High School in Greene County as a mathematics teacher.



MEREDITH WACHS STEVANS

(Class of 2010) accepted a position at Morristown East High School as a mathematics teacher.



ELIZABETH BATSON WILLIAMS
(Class of 2006)

is now Resource Development & Marketing Director for the Boys & Girls Club of Elizabethton/Carter County. She is president of the Junior League of Johnson City.



KAYLA WILLIAMS WEST
(Class of 2006)

has accepted a position as behavioral health nurse with Mountain States Health Alliance, in Johnson City. She is pursuing a Doctorate of Nursing

Practice at East Tennessee State University.



KATIE WILLIAMS
(Class of 2008)

spoke at the Google Apps European Summit in Zurich, Switzerland in September. She is the recipient of the Golden Zeef Marketing Award in the Netherlands.

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Tusculum College
P.O. Box 5112
Greeneville, TN 37743

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2015 Fall Newsletter



“ My philosophy has always been
that if I can change one person’s life,
I have forever changed the world. ”

- Kaitlin Norton

Niswonger Foundation College
Access Advisor