NEWS RELEASE

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**THE COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY ANNOUNCES WEEK OF GIFTEDNESS**

***February 17 to 23 Will Spotlight Kentucky’s Talent***

BOWLING GREEN – Dozens gathered in the Rotunda of the State Capitol in Frankfort yesterday to hear from legislators and gifted students alike on the importance of gifted education.

“Kentucky has strived to, and with some great success, empower more of our children, regardless of race, class, gender, regardless of rural or urban location, with the power of quality education,” said Colmon Elridge, Executive Assistant to the Governor. “If we are to continue to be successful in not only attracting 21st century jobs to Kentucky, but making Kentucky competitive throughout the world, we must come together with a community sense of common purpose to with our words, our works, and our deeds, empower all of our children, especially our gifted and talented students, to reach their full potential and that starts with moments like these, but must continue in our communities.”

Mr. Elridge later read the Proclamation stating February 17 to the 23, 2014 as Gifted Education Week in Kentucky.

“I believe we need more than a week next year,” quipped Elridge. “Let’s make it a whole month.”

Chairman of the Senate Education Committee Mike Wilson and Chairman of the House of Representatives Education Committee Derrick Graham also welcomed the crowd to the Capitol and mentioned the importance of gifted education initiatives and organizations like the Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science in Kentucky, the Kentucky Association for the Gifted (KAGE), and The Center for Gifted Studies at Western Kentucky University.

“Gifted education programs not only benefit the student, but the entire Commonwealth. When we give our children the opportunity to exercise their passion for learning and maximize their potential at an early age, we cultivate future leaders. Institutions like our Gatton Academy do an outstanding job of grooming students for a brighter future, and because of that, these students thrive,” stated Chairman Wilson. Chairman Graham followed Wilson by adding “ (KAGE Executive Director) Lynette Baldwin’s leadership and focus has been dedicated to advocating for the needs of the Commonwealth’s gifted and talented students.  I am also an advocate of the gifted and talented program and will continue to support this integral part of Kentucky’s educational system.”

Several of Kentucky’s gifted students spoke and performed during the ceremony. Matthew Pinkham, the 2013 KAGE Nicholas Green Distinguished Scholar from Elizabethtown, Kentucky, sang *Hallelujah* and *Man in the Mirror* while strumming his guitar. 2010 KAGE Nicholas Green Distinguished Student Katherine Goble, who resides in Lexington, performed on her violin while also giving a very pointed speech on the importance of education for gifted students. Gatton Academy’s Marcus Hughes from Crittenden County gave a speech on the Education Circle of Life.

“We all start with a passion,” stated Hughes. “That passion is furthered by a spark in education. Following the spark comes the pressure to perform and pursue your passion with given opportunities. This pressure results in a change in outlook that propels you to come full circle in the way of giving back to others to allow their passions to be chased.”

Pam Harper, the KAGE president and Pendleton County Schools’ Director of District-wide Programs, was the Mistress of Ceremonies for the event.

To view photos from the event, please visit <http://www.flickr.com/photos/giftedstudieswku/sets/72157640883076624/>.

**About The Kentucky Association for Gifted Education (KAGE)**

KAGE, officially organized in 1979, is a non-profit volunteer group of parents, teachers, administrators, other educators, and all citizens interested in promoting appropriate educational opportunities for gifted and talented youth in Kentucky. KAGE seeks to encourage the improvement of educational services to all students, including those that are gifted and talented, support appropriate educational opportunities for gifted and talented students, offer training for parents and teachers of gifted and talented students, disseminate information about opportunities for gifted and talented students as well as for parents and teachers of these students, inform the general public of the needs of gifted and talented students, assist parents, educators, and public officials in identifying and assessing resources to meet the needs of students who are gifted and talented, secure permanent state funding and legislation to provide appropriate education for the gifted and talented students in every school district in Kentucky, and provide scholarship assistance to qualified students participating in summer gifted programs offered by Kentucky Universities.

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