

## GRC to Celebrate 25 Years in 2008: Kitchen Table Witness to History

Around a kitchen table in November of 1982 bright ideas for a new venture for gifted children were lighting up like holiday sparklers! Three friends—Beverly Berla, Linda McCall, and Michele Peters—were tossing out “what ifs” as fast as they could talk. Suddenly, Gifted Resource Council (GRC) was born, and we offered “College Pudding,” our first attempt at a Learning Lab, in the Spring of ’83, only weeks after GRC was incorporated.

From that humble winter beginning came “Knights in White Sneakers,” the centerpiece of our first Summer Program (’83), along with two exciting weeks of Chinese, French, and Spanish language and culture classes held at Ladue Jr. High School. That fall, students flocked to

our Saturday Learning Labs on songwriting and “Chemistry for Kids” while their parents were understanding more about their gifted children through Parenting Classes, which continue to attract parents from both sides of the river.

Inspired by Robert Heinlein’s book *Space Cadet*, GRC’s first Space Academy held during the summer of 1984 at Clayton High School was enormously popular. But there was a problem: Space Academy had attracted mostly boys. Back at the drawing board, GRC’s founders

brainstormed about how more girls could become involved in the Summer Program. After all, the process was super—an all-day, intense focus on a topic of high student interest. The answer was Ancient Academy, which for its debut featured Greece, and its excited participants wore their Pegasus tee shirts with pride!

Math and science at GRC have always been important and popular with students.

Opportunities for creative expression as well as cultural and artistic explorations also continue to attract and delight gifted youngsters who may not find in school the challenge they need to apply their talents meaningfully. Thanks to the kitchen-table brainstorming of three friends

dedicated to opening doors for gifted children, Gifted Resource Council is currently planning a stunning celebration of 25 years of continuously reaching out to gifted youngsters in unique, stimulating, and memorable ways.

Watch for details of GRC’s 25th Anniversary Celebration during 2008 on our Web site as soon as they become available. It will be fun, family oriented and appropriately educational!



25th Anniversary  
1983 - 2008

## Dialogue with the Director

Gifted Resource Council will celebrate its 25th anniversary in 2008! An organization at twenty-five years of age! Is it possible to compare an organization with an individual? What is important about the mid-twenties for each?

Personally, I know that at the age of twenty-five, I had been teaching elementary school in the Lindbergh School District for three years. My career as an educator was well on its way. And then, in my twenty-fifth year, my first child was born. Talk about a change in my outlook on life! I began to think of the future in a whole new way. The concept of “family” became very important.

Can the same be said for an organization such as GRC? At twenty-five, is the concept of family first and foremost for Gifted Resource Council? Absolutely! Now more than ever, we at GRC see our role as one of support for families with gifted children. Through Parenting Classes and advice columns and programming opportunities for children, GRC purposefully provides avenues of growth for whole families. We hope to stimulate new ways of thinking and talking about issues – from environmental dilemmas to use of the internet for adults and children



*Sue Flesch, GRC executive director*

to continuing exploration of space. We truly hope to prepare children to become future decision makers for our community and beyond. And GRC provides support for parents in their quest to nurture their children’s unique gifts.


Yes, Gifted Resource Council is planning to celebrate 25 years of accomplishments during 2008. And we plan to do it in a “family way”. We’ll include the whole family in our celebration – from the people who first conceived of GRC as an organization to the many folks who have worked and volunteered through the years to the myriad of families who have been a part of Summer Academies or Academic Challenge Cup or Learning Labs. Everyone will be invited to

celebrate with us – and everyone will be encouraged to look to the future – as the GRC family grows!

Stay tuned for details of GRC’s 25th Anniversary Celebration...

*Susan C. Flesch*

Be the first to know all the latest happenings at GRC! Subscribe to our new RSS Feed and know what’s being offered for the upcoming Learning Lab or Summer Academies. Get all the information for Academic Challenge Cup.

Look for the RSS Feed icon  at the bottom of our home page and subscribe today.

You won’t regret it!



*ECO Academy ‘entrepreneurs’ display products of their 2007 business “Bag-It, Inc.”*

## GRC Alumna Gives Back, Leads and Enriches the Community

Pastor Teresa Mithen recently came to GRC's attention when she referred a child from her parish for a GRC Learning Lab. "I want other children, particularly my parishioners, to have the same kind of creative learning experiences I did at GRC," she said. "I wish all parents knew how well GRC programs cultivate children's love of learning and provide the type of creative, imaginative programs and stimulation that intelligent children care about, yet are often unable to access in their regular educational environments."

Mithen attended GRC's Space Academy and Ancient Academy from 1983-1990. She also attended Learning Lab classes on Saturdays during the school year in Chemistry and Geology. She began volunteering with GRC's Summer Academies after ninth grade because she wanted to help other gifted children have the same stimulating, hands-on opportunities that she had experienced.

"At a time in my life when I was academically bored and socially ostracized at my public elementary school, GRC programs offered me both academic and intellectual stimulation, as well as a group of friends and peers who shared my love of learning," Mithen said. Her mother, Dr. Phyllis Jacobson Mithen, PhD, with a doctorate degree from St. Louis University, was determined to find an environment that would nurture her daughter's strengths.

GRC experiences nurtured her love of learning. "I especially loved Ancient Academy—learning about different early societies such as Greece, Rome, Egypt, Medieval Europe, staging choreographed sword fighting, and making crafts such as Egyptian senet games, costumes, jewelry and wooden swords," she said.

These GRC experiences eventually helped

influence Mithen's career choices. "My love of history has continued throughout my life," she said. "At Yale, I majored in history. My studies and my thesis focused on the experience of Women in the Medieval Christian Church. To relax, I read historical fiction. Currently, I am reading Phillipa Gregory's novels about the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. No doubt, I am sure that GRC played a major role in cultivating my love of history."



*Pastor Teresa Mithen, GRC Alumna*

Mithen is a graduate of Crossroads School, Yale College (B.A., History), the University of Chicago (M.P.P.) and the General Theological Seminary (M.Div.), and is currently working on a doctor of ministry degree.

Since she returned to St. Louis in June of 2004, Mithen has served as pastor of Saint John's Episcopal Church in south St. Louis and as the priest in charge of the Episcopal Campus Ministry at St. Louis University. She is also the Faith Committee Co-Chair for the St. Louis Area Jobs with Justice program and an Associate for the Order of St. Helena.

"We are very proud of Pastor Teresa's achievements," said GRC Executive Director Susan Flesch. "She is an outstanding example of how GRC programs meet the academic and social needs of gifted students who will, as adults, make significant contributions to the entire community. We especially appreciate Teresa's efforts to 'spread the word' about GRC programs to young people with whom she has contact in her role as a pastor."

## GRC Board Member Earns National Recognition as Exceptional Educator

Sandra L. (Sandy) Kalin recently was recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) as a National Distinguished Principal for the exceptional leadership she has provided since serving as principal of Bethel Lutheran School in University City since 1993. Kalin and 61 other NAESP principals were honored at a formal reception and awards dinner in Washington D.C. in October.

Kalin has served on the Board of Directors of Gifted Resource Council since 1984, serving a term as president of the board. Sandy has taught with GRC's Learning Labs and Summer Academies, most recently with Math, Marvels & More and ECO Academy. She also volunteers her time with Academic Challenge Cup, particularly with Creative Convention.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) nominated Kalin for the NAESP award after her selection as the ELCA Principal of the Year for 2007. "Sandy always has the best interests of her students in mind as she provides development opportunities for her staff, re-evaluates her curriculum on a regular basis, and has her teachers teach to their strengths and knows every one of the children in the school," said Donna Braband, Director of Schools for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. "Her success lies in caring and sensitivity to the multicultural setting of her school, the variety of religious backgrounds the children come from, the varied socio-economic factors that come with each family. She strives to keep thriving students at the school

even when times become tough for the families."

Kalin takes a leadership role in involving her students in community betterment programs with other schools in the community, such as Our Lady of Lourdes, completing service hours each year and empowering her teachers. "Allowing teachers to make decisions on curriculum each year empowers them to create a results oriented environment," said Kalin.

"My job is to make sure there is constant improvement in the curriculum and the education we deliver."

GRC Executive Director Susan Flesch values Kalin's advice, commitment to gifted students and the many hours of volunteer work she does to strengthen GRC programs. "Sandy is amazing," Flesch said. "I know I can always count on her to understand the issues, help us come up with an effective approach and back it up with her own efforts. Sandy's volunteer involvement with Gifted Resource

Council for more than twenty years has had an enormously positive impact on the organization and untold numbers of children."



*Sandy Kalin*



*Two Math, Marvels & More 'scholars' are engrossed in a mathematical probability exercise.*

## How Should I Encourage My Gifted Child?

By Dennis O'Brien

*"My husband insists our 9-year-old stop wasting time writing poetry and stories so he can concentrate on math and science and be an engineer like he is."*

Does this sound familiar? Loving, well-educated and well-intending parents pushing children to pursue their goals and fulfill their dreams without giving their children opportunities to discover their own. This is a recipe for disaster.

Parents who do this may be unaware of how counter-productive their interference can be. I saw parents pressure their incredibly gifted son to become a doctor like his mother. He complained and resisted for a while, but ultimately complied and eventually graduated from medical school before he found the courage to drop out of the career path they had chosen for him and pursue his own as a high school science teacher and possibly administrator. Money, years of stress and family conflict were among the prices they all paid for his parents misguided insistence that they knew what was best for their son.

Others rebel earlier, often by failing or dropping out of college.

It's tragic for a child and a terrible waste for the community when the talents of our most gifted youth are compromised or squandered by parental mistakes like this.

Consider these tips when contemplating how much pressure to put on a child to pursue or excel at something you believe to be important for her future.

→ First, back up from your intense involvement long enough to sort out your own motives and put things into perspective, including your own dreams, frustrations and disappointments. Ask yourself some hard questions: Do you have regrets about your own decisions that you are trying to right by micromanaging your child's career? What vision for your child are you trying to fast-track?

Your 8-year-old daughter may not be really ready to begin driving herself to excel at all things scientific so she can be accepted at Princeton en route to Harvard Medical School so she can eventually specialize in cardiology. That may be your roadmap for her, but is it hers? Should it be? Wouldn't it be healthier—and more productive in the long run—for her to explore her interests, develop her own dreams and pursue them at her own pace?

→ Encourage your child to explore his own interests, and offer multiple opportunities to do so. What interests your child? What else might interest him? What can you do to encourage him to discover them?

Enrolling your child in a variety of GRC's Saturday Learning Labs will provide opportunities to explore up to four special interests a year, and GRC's Summer Academies offer opportunities to explore an area of interest in depth over a two-, four- or six-week period.

→ Resolve parental disagreements in favor of your child's

best interests. Stand up for your child if your spouse becomes too demanding, and make sure you both speak with one voice. If you disagree about how much to trust your child's instincts, your child will be even more confused.

→ Encourage your child to pursue her passions in as much depth as possible once they have emerged. "Helping your child develop and sustain passionate interests is one of the most important things parents of gifted students can do," said Sally Reis, the principal investigator for the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented.

"Interests matter, perhaps more than anything else," Reis said. "Research indicates that the ability to have and sustain interests, including interests in several different areas, may be the best predictor of high levels of adult creative productivity."

→ Encourage your child to pursue non-academic interests.

A passion for photography, dance, art, music or tinkering with electronics can also help a child develop the character traits that lead to "creative, productive giftedness" (as Reis puts it) and success in life. Some passions lead directly to career choices. Others simply teach a child to plan, to attack a project aggressively, to persist and master a challenging interest for the inherent pleasure it brings them. Traits like these are better predictors of success than test scores or grades.

→ Help your child set reasonable goals and develop a practical plan to achieve them. Be careful that he does not set expectations that are too aggressive.

→ Follow-up gently. Make sure your questions convey support and interest, rather than disappointment or impatience. Get a grip on your own emotions if things don't go as well or swiftly as you hope. Help her focus on the process of pursuing her goals in a systematic way rather than grading her achievements to date.

→ Offer praise and encouragement, but don't pressure. We all want our children to work hard and accomplish much, but pressure usually backfires. It's important to praise a child's efforts and risk-taking along the way, not the results.

→ Allow your child's interests to change. An early interest in animal husbandry need not mean that a child should begin preparing for a career in veterinary medicine. It does mean she has found a motive that will help her develop skills, positive character and learning traits while preparing for the future.

Using these strategies will help you influence, guide and support your child in her quest to explore her interests, pursue her own passions, set her own goals and follow her own dreams to success.

*Dennis O'Brien, MA, LCSW, is an experienced educator and therapist who has written educational materials for newspapers, magazines and the Washington University School of Medicine Department of Psychiatry.*

## GRC to Co-Sponsor Conference For Parents and Educators of Gifted Students

Gifted Resource Council has joined with the University of Missouri-St. Louis, Gifted Association of Missouri and St. Louis Association for Gifted Education to co-sponsor an important conference designed to strengthen education for gifted students in the metropolitan St. Louis area. This is the 7th such area wide conference GRC has co-sponsored. The conference, *Inquiring Minds, Responsive Teachers: Challenging Gifted Students in the Regular Classroom*, is designed to explore and promote ways regular classroom teachers, parents, gifted specialists, counselors and administrators can work together to maximize learning opportunities for academically talented students. The Conference theme is "Leap Ahead: Steps to the Future."

### Renowned Presenter

Keynote speaker, Barbara Kerr, Ph. D., earned a doctorate degree in counseling psychology in 1978 from the University of Missouri. Since August 2005, she has been the Williamson Family distinguished Professor of Counseling Psychology in the School of Education's Department of Psychology and Research in Education at the University of Kansas.

Previously she has served as professor of psychology in education at Arizona State University, associate director of the Connie Belin National Center for Gifted Education at the University of Iowa, and established a guidance center for gifted youth at the University of Nebraska.

Kerr is the author of four books: *A Handbook for Counseling Gifted and Talented*; *Smart Girls*; *Smart Boys*; and *Letters to the Medicine Man: The Shaping of Spiritual Intelligence*. She has written more than 100 articles and papers on the topic of nurturing talent. Her research ranges from case studies of inventors, artists, writers and architects to large-scale studies of students who attained the highest scores on the ACT college admissions test.

### Classroom Teachers Welcomed

The conference will emphasize what regular classroom teachers--not just gifted specialists--can do to accommodate the needs of gifted students while integrating them into the

classroom. Regular classroom teachers often have the most influence over a child's academic experience and growth.

### "A Unique Opportunity"

GRC's executive director, Susan C. Flesch, encourages parents and teachers of gifted students to plan their schedules now so they can participate in the conference. "This is a unique opportunity for parents and teachers to learn from a renowned expert and a gifted Missouri state legislator.

"Both Barbara Kerr and Sara Lampe bring a wealth of knowledge about gifted children, their needs and how to encourage their success. Add to that, insight into the workings of state legislatures, and you have the recipe for an outstanding conference! I hope you—and your child's teachers—will join us at the 'Inquiring Minds Conference.' What a perfect way to spend a leap year day!"

Sara Lampe is a former teacher of gifted students and a Missouri State Representative from the 138th District. "Sara's

unique perspective will certainly enrich the conference and provide valuable direction to all of us who want to enhance the opportunities for gifted children in Missouri," said Flesch.

**Who:** Parents, Teachers, Counselors and Administrators  
**What:** Inquiring Minds/Responsive Teachers: Challenging Gifted Students in the Regular Classroom  
**When:** February 28-29, 2008  
**Cost:** Thursday evening only - \$21  
 Friday - \$46  
 Both days - \$65  
**How:** Call 314-516-5655 for an application

### What to Expect

Whether you are a parent, teacher, counselor, administrator or teacher of the gifted, you will leave this conference with an awareness of the current issues involved in quality gifted education and with concrete suggestions for practice. The conference offers you an opportunity to:

- Attend concurrent workshops designed specifically for your role as a parent, classroom teacher, counselor or administrator.
- Hear national and local experts offer concrete and workable solutions to enhance success in the regular classroom.
- Network with others and share insights.
- Learn about resources in the St. Louis area.
- Learn what you can do to expand and enhance opportunities for gifted children in Missouri.

*Conference, continued on page 7*

*Conference, continued from page 6*

### **Keynote Speaker**

Although the material that Dr. Kerr covers will be valuable to everyone who works with gifted children, efforts have been made to address the special interests of parents at the Thursday evening session, February 28, 2008, 7-9 p.m. After introductory remarks, Missouri Representative Sara Lampe will speak on the state of gifted education in Missouri, with a special focus on recent gains and current challenges. Dr. Kerr will provide the context of her work and set the stage for a panel discussion by adults who participated as children in gifted programs in St. Louis. Questions will address the short-and long-term impact of gifted programs and individuals' lives.

Dr. Kerr's keynote address, "Milestones and Danger Zones for Girls and Boys", on Friday, February 29, will discuss how gender interacts with talent at each stage of development, from kindergarten to college.

### **Choices for Teachers and Administrators**

Participants will be able to attend at least three breakout sessions on a variety of topics that will help them address the needs of diverse groups, including gifted minorities. Representative Lampe will also hold a session with administrators about the importance of continuing gifted education in a district with the current No Child Left Behind focus and the changes in state funding.

All in all, this conference is a wonderful opportunity for both parents and professionals to expand their understanding of how to challenge gifted students, anticipate and deal with some of the challenges they face, and to help them fully develop their potential. Call 314-516-5655 for more information or to request an application form.

Information may also be found at <http://www.umsl.edu/teachers>.

## **Become a Member of Gifted Resource Council**

Your membership is important to GRC as we celebrate our 25th Anniversary in 2008 and look to the next 25 years and beyond. Please use the enclosed envelope to become a member or to renew your membership and be a part of our exciting future!

## **Mark Your Calendar**

*November 26, 2007* – Annual GRC Phonathon

*January 4 & 7, 2008* – Academic Challenge Cup's Creative Convention at Washington University's Wohl Center.

Parenting classes will be offered.

*January 8, 2008* – Academic Challenge Cup's LinguiSHTIK

Competition at Washington University's Wohl Center.

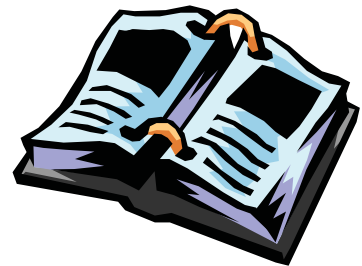
Parenting classes will be offered.

*January 26, 2008* – Summer Opportunities Fair at MICDS, 101 N. Warson Rd.

*February 2-March 8, 2008 (Six Saturdays)* – Winter Learning Lab at Wydown Middle School, 6500 Wydown Blvd. Parenting Classes will be offered.

*February 28-29, 2008* – Inquiring Minds/Responsive Teachers: Challenging Gifted Students in the Regular Classroom Conference at the University of Missouri-St. Louis

*March 11-14, 2008* – Academic Challenge Cup's Equations Competitions at Washington University's Wohl Center. Parenting classes will be offered.



**Call GRC at 314-962-5920 for more information on any of these events.**

## **mindwonders**

informs the public about activities of Gifted Resource Council and about issues relevant to the development of bright and talented children and youth.

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**Fall 2007**

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## **Calling All GRC Alumni!**

Gifted Resource Council (GRC) is 25! We want to connect with all you GRC alums. Where are you? What are you into these days? We'd love to know what you've done since your GRC experience. So, will you contact us? We'd like to get alums together and share your news with each other. Please send your news and contact info to: [GRC25years@giftedresourcecouncil.org](mailto:GRC25years@giftedresourcecouncil.org) Thanks!

Gifted Resource Council is a not-for-profit education agency serving the greater St. Louis Metropolitan area. Its purpose is to bring together the resources of the community, the schools and parents to help bright and talented children achieve their potential.