

## GRC to Co-Sponsor Conference for Parents and Educators: March 20-21, 2002

**G**ifted 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 gifted education in the metropolitan St. Louis area.

This conference is designed to explore how regular classroom teachers, parents and administrators can work together to maximize learning opportunities for gifted students. In addition to raising awareness about issues involved in quality education for gifted children, participants will leave with concrete suggestions.

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 rare opportunity for parents and teachers to learn from Sylvia Rimm, a renowned national expert, and to interact with one another. Care has been taken to address the special needs of each in separate sessions. Participation will certainly pay dividends for their students," said Flesch.

### Renowned Presenter

The conference keynote speaker is a child psychologist and nationally acclaimed author who specializes in working with children who are not performing up to their abilities in school. Sylvia B. Rimm, Ph.D., is a renowned writer and lecturer on gifted and talented education, creativity, underachievement and special issues related to girls and women.

Rimm directs the Family Achievement Clinic in Cleveland, Ohio, and is a clinical professor at Case Western

Reserve University School of Medicine. She hosts a popular weekly call-in program on national public radio, "Family Talk With Sylvia Rimm." In addition to authoring many books and articles, Rimm also writes a syndicated newspaper column.

Katie Couric, NBC "Today" show host, described Rimm as "a welcome voice of calm and reason — someone who offers practical advice, with almost immediate results."

### The Program

Although much of the material Dr. Rimm covers will be valuable to everyone, efforts have been made to meet the special needs of parents at the Wednesday evening session and teachers at the day-long Thursday sessions.

★ Wednesday:  
"Smart Parenting for Gifted Children"

★ Thursday:  
"Marching Together to the Beat of a Different

Drummer: The Creative Underachiever"

★ Special Session: Following the conference, Dr. Rimm will discuss her recent book: "How Jane Won: 55 Successful Women Share How They Grew from Ordinary Girls to Extraordinary Women."

### What to Expect

Adult-like vocabulary, unique thinking and intense emotions generate special opportunities and create special risks for gifted children. Rimm will discuss perfectionism,

*GRC Conference, continued on page 2*

## Dialogue with the Director

“Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some inspire others to greatness.” This quote is from a father of a seventeen year old who lives in Walnut Creek, California. It is a take-off on William Shakespeare’s famous quote, “Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them.”

I believe that I like this father’s quote the best. Why? Perhaps because I think like a teacher or a parent, but also because I like to think like an advocate for gifted children. And because I believe that “inspiring others to greatness” is what Gifted Resource Council is all about.

From Academic Challenge Cup and its opportunities for children to work together on a team for a common goal...to Summer Academies where ancient cultures are examined as well as scientific exploration of the universe is explored...to Learning Labs where young people can learn of Shakespeare or medicine or robots or Harry Potter... These are the ways in which GRC offers young people the opportunity to grow and expand their horizons as they reach for their own stars. These are the avenues that GRC provides to “inspire others to greatness.”

In these days when “greatness” is being thrust upon us, let’s work together to inspire children (our most precious asset) to greatness. Let’s acknowledge their abilities, encourage their dreams and strive to create a better, more compassionate world for them to inherit...



*Sue Flesch, GRC executive director*

*GRC Conference, continued from page 1*

verbosity, over-empowerment and underachievement — all issues with which parents and teachers of gifted children struggle.

Sample Rimm comments:

★ You can’t prevent your children from feeling pressure in most middle schools unless you encourage them to conform to an anti-learning standard.

★ Underachievers unconsciously manipulate parents and teachers in ways that keep them feeling safe in the short run but plunge them deeper and deeper into underachievement.

★ *Positive, patient and persevering* remain the critical traits for parent advocacy.

★ Gifted children who have received too much preschool praise sometimes become school phobic and lose confidence when they enter school. Even more likely, high-energy gifted children may develop behavior problems.

Dr. Rimm has many more provocative and insightful observations about gifted children, and the best way to benefit from her experience is to attend the session, listen to her in person and ask your own questions. Parents and teachers are encouraged to call Floyd Welsh at University of Missouri-St. Louis (314-516-7250) for a brochure. Register early for this important conference.

### Academic Challenge Cup to Expand!

After three successive record-setting years, GRC has found a way to accommodate the increasing demand by schools wanting to enter teams in the friendly competitions of Academic Challenge Cup.

In addition to the traditional four day sessions at Washington University on March 5-8, 2002, GRC will hold a fifth day of ACC competition at Fontbonne College on March 19. Fontbonne is directly across Wydown Blvd. from Washington University.

Academic Challenge Cup is a series of academic competitions in math, language skills and creative problem-solving for students in grades 2-8. Teams may be coached by teachers or parents.

To register, inquire about dates and times or purchase practice games, call (314) 842-0666.

## Gifted Resource Council Teachers Recognized

Great teachers have long been an important reason that courses offered by Gifted Resource Council have proven so attractive to students. GRC hires experienced teachers who have demonstrated their ability to reach gifted students in other venues. "Finding the best teachers is the first thing I do when building a curriculum. They always come up with creative ideas for courses and, even more important, have the experience and skills to get the children involved in the hands-on, cooperative learning which has become a hallmark of GRC," said Executive Director Susan Flesch.

### Gifted Association of Missouri Recognizes Marla Dell

GRC teacher and parent Marla Dell was awarded the Gifted Association of Missouri (GAM) 2001 Parent Award at a recent ceremony at the Lake of the Ozarks.

Dell, who was recognized for her outstanding contributions to gifted education in Missouri, was introduced to the conference by Susan Flesch, Executive Director of Gifted Resource Council, who had previously nominated her.

Since 1995, Dell has served as GRC's part-time book-keeper. She has also shared her artistic talents by teaching enriching art courses at the Learning Labs sponsored by Gifted Resource Council.

"Marla is the epitome of the parent of a gifted child who uses her knowledge about the importance of specialized opportunities for talented young people to benefit an entire community. She believes strongly that we all need to identify and expand upon the strengths that each child possesses. She recognizes the importance of teachers and parents setting boundaries for talented children, while also serving as "encouragers," said Flesch.

Because her son was too young for the district's gifted program, Marla and her husband Gregory began to learn all they could about gifted children and used this to help their precocious child. When Pat was accepted into the fledgling PEGS (Program for Exceptionally Gifted Students) as one of only six students, volunteers were needed to assist with the math program. Dell stepped forward to begin her career as a teacher of gifted children.

Marla served as director of Advent Pre-School for seven years. For the past eight years she has been deeply involved in supporting gifted education in the Lindbergh School District. She has served on the district's school board since 1997 and is currently its president.

Dell's experience with educational endeavors has convinced her that teachers must help children "be comfortable with who they are, as well as enjoy what they are learning."

"It's so easy for parents to get caught up in the academic achievements of a child who is a voracious learner. They need to encourage their child's involvement in social activities, sports, the arts, community service and other

activities that help children develop into healthy, well-rounded human beings. Don't let them narrow down. Balance is key," Dell insists.



*Marla Dell, her husband Greg and son Pat celebrate her award as GAM's Parent of the Year 2001.*

Marla reflects that, "It's a joy to teach the kids at GRC because they want to be there. They soak up everything you have to offer. They're fun, can do so much and learn so fast."

### Missouri Teacher of the Year Finalist

GRC teacher Judy Joerding was selected as first runner-up for the 2001 Missouri Teacher of the Year.

For the past two years, Joerding has taught science and math to gifted students in grades 4-6 at the PROBE Center in the Ferguson-Florissant School District. She has worked for the district for 28 years.

Joerding switched to teaching gifted students at the encouragement of her colleagues who felt her approach to teaching math and science would be perfect for gifted children.

Judy uses "scenario teaching" to help children feel part of a total experience which helps them learn skills within a context while stressing their usefulness. For example, she has gotten thousands of dollars worth of equipment donated

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*GRC Teachers Recognized, continued from page 3*

by area hospitals so that her classroom at PROBE resembles a fully equipped emergency room. Students learn math and science while undergoing “training” to be physicians.

She develops all her own curriculum, and expects it to be “rigorous as well as interesting.” In fact, her gifted middle-school students utilize texts and written materials actually used by Washington University Medical School students!



*Judy Joerding assists two young ladies in this fall's Learning Lab class "Crime Scene Investigation."*

Joerding uses the same scenario approach for the math and science courses for students in GRC's Learning Labs. “Judy uses ‘real world’ experience to make her courses come alive for her students. Each time her approach is totally different. For instance, her kids dressed in hospital scrubs and turned their classroom into an emergency room last year, and this fall her students have become forensic scientists learning science by serving as crime scene investigators in a mystery drama!” Flesch said.

Joerding describes teaching gifted students at GRC as “a wonderful challenge. They are self-motivated learners who really demonstrate higher level thinking skills. It's great to see them truly experience the joy of science and math!”

#### **Teacher Generates Award-Winning Book**

Hameeda Qadafi guided her gifted students at Pershing Accelerated School in University City to write and illustrate an award winning book, “We Dream of a World . . .”

The book was selected for the 2001 Grand Prize for Nonfiction from among 2,000 entries to the “Kids Are Authors” contest sponsored annually by Scholastic Book Fairs.

Qadafi and the students were recognized at a special assembly on November 2, 2001. The book is available

through Scholastic Books.

Hameeda worked with fifteen gifted second, third, fourth and fifth grade students to write an inspiring and practical book about how children and families can help make the world a better place. According to Scholastic, it's a book “for dreamers and doers.”

According to Flesch, this is typical of Qadafi's creative approach to teaching gifted children. “Hameeda has lived in many parts of the world and uses her broad cultural background and sensitivity to design a wide range of interesting courses involving creative expression, the arts and team-building. She works equally well with preschoolers and middle schoolers, something not all teachers can do,” Flesch said.

Qadafi has taught gifted students in the School District of University City for ten years and gifted students for GRC in both Summer Academies and Saturday Learning Labs for the past four years. She teaches gifted students at Delmar Harvard Elementary in University City as well as Pershing Accelerated School.

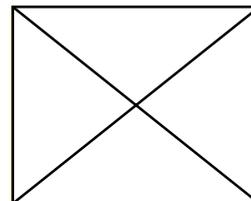
“I love teaching gifted children,” Hameeda said. “They work well together and are so responsive to a challenge!”



*Hameeda Qadafi works with a GRC student in Math, Marvels and More during the summer of 2001.*

**For more information on GRC's Learning Lab, call (314) 842-0666 or visit our website: [www.cybam.com/grc](http://www.cybam.com/grc)**

## Mark Your Calendar



December 3, 2001 – Annual GRC Phonathon

January 26, 2002 – Summer Opportunities Fair at MICDS, 101 N. Warson Road

February 9 - March 16, 2002 (Six Saturdays) – Winter Learning Lab at Wydown Middle School, 6500 Wydown Blvd. Parenting classes will be offered.

March 5 - 8, 2002 – Academic Challenge Cup at Washington University's Wohl Center. Parenting classes will be offered.

March 19, 2002 – Academic Challenge Cup at Fontbonne College's Alumni Cafeteria

March 20 - 21, 2002 – *Inquiring Minds/Responsive Teachers: Challenging Gifted Students in the Regular Classroom* Conference at the University of Missouri-St. Louis

June 17 - July 26, 2002 – GRC's Summer Academies at Flynn Park Elementary School, 7220 Waterman

**Call GRC at (314) 842-0666 for more information on any of these events.**

### Ancient Academy Expands, Now Available to All Middle Schoolers



*Ancient Academy students dramatize an ancient festival in a park setting.*

In response to requests by many students and parents, Gifted Resource Council has opened its very popular Ancient Academy to include 7th and 8th graders.

This expansion of the curriculum will enable students who enjoyed their previous experiences studying ancient cultures and recreating their rites, dramas and artifacts to continue to participate in these hands-on learning experiences as 7th and 8th graders. Of course, new students in grades 3-8 are welcome as well.

More details will be published in the Summer Academies brochure available in February. Parents of interested children should act promptly to enroll, because these courses usually fill quickly.

## How can I help my child deal with terror?

By Dennis O'Brien

Parents are concerned about their children's reaction to the recent terrorist attacks and subsequent threats which have traumatized America and shocked the world. Children, like their parents, are still upset and realize how likely it is that, in one form or another, there may be other attacks.

This tragedy is a major emotional milestone for children, partly because of the extensive exposure to the terror in the media, partly because children realize that many routine aspects of national life were abruptly interrupted and certainly because children realize how greatly it has upset their parents.

Several factors make gifted children more vulnerable to feelings of fear and helplessness than their peers:

- ❖ Gifted children are typically more sensitive than other children and far more concerned about world issues, justice and others who are in distress.

- ❖ They also tend to be more emotionally intense than their peers and worry about what they cannot control.

- ❖ Their greater intelligence gives them access to more information than peers but does not increase their ability to deal with what they learn and imagine.

- ❖ They are highly attuned to adults, and adults are clearly distressed.

Here are some basic ways parents can help children cope with this and other similar crises:

- ❖ Begin by sorting out your own reactions.

It is difficult to listen carefully to children express their feelings or project the calmness that gives children confidence if you have not dealt with your own emotions.

Most of us responded with a variety of feelings, and it is important to identify and express each of them. It may be helpful to express your own feelings to a spouse or friends. Keep in mind that talking about the horrific events — including how it would feel to be involved in it — is not the same as expressing your

own feelings.

Because children instinctively take their cues from parents, the last thing you want to do is overwhelm your child with your own unexamined emotions.

- ❖ Expect that an event this horrific has stirred up feelings about other personal events that may have caused feelings of grief, vulnerability, helplessness or anger.

Take a moment to reflect on personal experiences which previously caused you to have similar feelings. To what extent are your current reactions intensified by these personal experiences?

It is perfectly normal for feelings which have been dealt with previously to resurface with surprising potency. Keep in mind that this may also be true for children. The important thing is to acknowledge that this has occurred, deal once again with these personal traumas and move

**Sort out your own reactions first . . . take care of your own well-being . . . and remember the basics.**

forward.

- ❖ Identify the feelings you will be most uncomfortable hearing your child express and make special efforts to listen to these.

- ❖ Encourage your children to voice their thoughts, questions and feelings. Listen quietly and paraphrase what you hear.

- ❖ Minimize media exposure, including television and the Internet.

- ❖ Limit the "what if" speculations gifted children are so prone to indulge in.

- ❖ Encourage critical thinking. By asking clarifying questions and supplying necessary information, parents can help children distinguish between rumors, emotional reactions, expert opinions, facts and misinformation.

- ❖ Maintain family routines, including meals, recreation and religious activities.

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*Dealing with Terror, continued from page 6*

❖ Reassure your children of their personal safety and help them find ways to express their empathy for those whose lives were directly traumatized by the events.

❖ Continue to check on your child, especially on anniversaries (weekly, monthly, annual) of the event or whenever other reminders occur. Hugs and reassurance are always good — after you have listened.

❖ Take care of your own well-being. Talk about your feelings, exercise, rely upon routines and use prayer and self-talk to reassure yourself that you and your loved ones will regain emotional stability.

❖ Don't be surprised if your own distress continues for a while, as well your child's, especially if painful personal experiences have been stirred up.

It is normal to lose sleep, develop stomach or head aches, feel lethargic, depressed, unfocused, fragile or personally vulnerable in the aftermath of such a horrific occurrence. If symptoms persist for six weeks, see a counselor.

More than anything, children take their emotional cues from parents, and our words and actions must communicate our confidence that we are safe now, and that we can learn and grow by responding with courage, dignity and empathy for others.

Parents who use this crisis to help their children grow are preparing them to handle many other crises they will face in their lives.

*Dennis O'Brien is a licensed clinical social worker, experienced educator and therapist, and executive director of KidzLink, an organization serving medically fragile children.*

**If you have questions  
or for more information,  
call (314) 842-0666 or visit our  
website: [www.cybam.com/grc](http://www.cybam.com/grc)**

### BECOME A MEMBER OF GIFTED RESOURCE COUNCIL

Now *you* can participate in shaping America's future by becoming a member of **Gifted Resource Council**, a not-for-profit education agency serving bright and talented young people. Your tax-deductible contribution will enable us to improve existing programs, extend offerings and reach more children. Your membership will not only benefit gifted children, but also entitle you to receive the following:

**Member:** \$40

- \* Priority registration for all programs
- \* \$10 discount off a Learning Lab registration
- \* **FREE parenting classes**
- \* Use of GRC Library
- \* Free registration at selected workshops and lectures

**Friend:** \$60

- \* All of the above, *plus*
- \* \$10 discount off a Summer Program

**Sponsor:** \$100

- \* All of the above, *plus*
- \* Additional \$25 discount off a Summer Program (\$35 total)

**Patron:** \$250

- \* All of the above, *plus*
- \* One FREE Learning Lab course *or*
- \* Learning Lab scholarship in your name at your request

**Institutional Membership:** \$100  
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**I am also interested in helping as a volunteer. Please contact me.**

**Please mail check to: Gifted Resource Council, 12225 Eddie and Park Road, St. Louis, MO 63127**

## 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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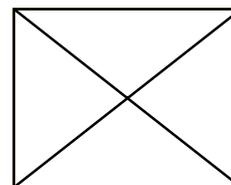
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GRC needs your charitable support to continue providing talented children with special enrichment opportunities. Tax deductible membership gifts keep fees as low as possible and provide scholarship assistance to those who need it.

Please use the enclosed envelope to mail your membership gift today.



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.