

Green County educators awarded in CU ceremony

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"Children still need teachers who care about them and believe in them ... create environments where they feel safe and happy. They still need teachers who are patient and work hard to help them learn and grow. It's as simple as that, not always easy, but always worth the effort. Always." – the late Suzanne Dennis, who was 64 at her death.

Laura Beth Hayes, the daughter of the late Suzanne Dennis, read this writing from her mother about teachers at Campbellsville University's 33rd annual Excellence in Teaching Award Program Ceremony May 11 in Ransdell Chapel.

Hayes, who has taught 16 years and is a former Excellence in Teaching Award recipient, spoke before 197 teachers who were honored from 68 school districts in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

A total of 3,946 teachers have been honored since the program began in 1987.

Hayes, a teacher at Morningside Elementary School in the Elizabethtown Independent School District, has also taught in the Hardin County School District. She was salutatorian of her 2003 Campbellsville University class, and she and her husband, Jason, completed their Master of Arts degrees from Campbellsville University in 2006.

She was the recipient of the Excellence in Teaching award early in her career and was the 2016 recipient of the WHAS EXCEL Award for Elizabethtown Independent Schools. She was recently named "Wednesday's Woman" by The News-Enterprise in Elizabethtown, for her work at school and in the community.

In her address, Hayes quoted her mother, who had taught for 37 years and was a graduate of Campbellsville College. She said her mother dedicated her life to teaching but had begun to struggle with feelings of being "old," as her 37th year quickly passed.

She was distraught with the decision to retire, to the point where she was physically ill, and, in her words, felt like her life was ending.

"All she ever wanted to be was a teacher," Hayes said. "She worked tirelessly for more than three decades and the thought of living life without her beloved students was almost too much for her to accept. These struggles consumed her thoughts."

"She was the kind of teacher who preferred to stay under the radar and would much rather accumulate drawings from her students than accolades or awards."

Hayes said her mother was not going to sign her letter of intent to teach for another year, but she actually changed her mind and decided not to retire, and she seemed to be feeling better.

On the morning of March 13, 2017, Den-

nis was driving to school and she crashed into a tree going 55 MPH due to some type of cardiac event. She died instantly – visible to students and families as they drove to school.

Dennis was honored in many ways after her death. Over 1,000 people attended her visitation and more than 500 people were at her funeral.

Awards were given in her honor, her school library was named after her, scholarships funds were created, trees planted, essays written and coverage from news outlets and social media exploded, her daughter said.

"It was extremely difficult to even comprehend the impact that she had made on others," Hayes said. "It seemed unfathomable that, just a few weeks prior, she questioned her worth and value as a teacher. Oh, how I longed for her to see the expanse of love and admiration that was revealed."

"What a mighty legacy she has left behind. And, in spite of her absence on this earth, she is still teaching others."

Hayes challenged the teachers at the ceremony to "find joy in the small moments. Embrace the mundane and the daily challenges that taunt us with the false notion that what we do isn't important enough or doesn't matter."

"Find confidence in knowing that wiping noses, sharpening pencils, grading stacks of tests and engaging in the antics of teenagers is part of the work – and a meaningful part of the work."

She urged the teachers to "love your students – and your colleagues – in the simplest yet most sincere ways. For these are the moments that will define our careers. These are the memories our students will recall when they see us in the grocery store or look at their old yearbooks."

"These are the things people will speak about as they read your obituary or stand at your funeral."

Hayes congratulated the teachers and said, "Thank you for already being the type of educators that will be remembered -- and cherished -- for years to come. Thank you for remaining faithful to a profession that does not always feel rewarding and can drain your time and energy."

"Thank you for the big love you show in the smallest of ways every single time you start the day. Your honor today is a privilege and a moment I hope you will always treasure."

"But beyond any accolades of today, I hope your experience has been a wonderful reminder that school is not something to package or define. We cannot step back on the mount and risk losing sight of perspective -- or our students. Let's open our eyes to the 'so much more' of education. My heart, and the hearts of your students, will continue to grow for years to come -- because of you."

Dr. Shane Garrison, vice president for



Photo by Joshua Williams/CU

Green County Schools' teachers were honored at Campbellsville University's recent Excellence in Teaching Award Ceremony. Dr. Donna Hedgepath, far left, provost and vice president for academic affairs, and Dr. Lisa Allen, sixth from left, dean of the School of Education, presented the awards. From left are: Hedgepath; William Hodges, superintendent; Kristen York, Green County Primary School principal; Michelle Keltner, Green County Primary School; Amanda Snyder, Green County Middle School; Cortney Mooney, Green County High School; Kayla Daniels, Green County Middle School assistant principal; Allen; and Ben Davenport, Green County High School principal.

enrollment services, gave the benediction for the ceremony and announced, as of July 1, Campbellsville University will be lowering the current graduate education tuition of \$399 per credit hour by \$100 to \$299 per credit hour. This will make Campbellsville University have the lowest graduate tuition of any college or university in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

Dr. Donna Hedgepath, provost and vice president for academic affairs, and Dr. Lisa Allen, dean of the School of Education, welcomed the teachers to the ceremony and gave out the awards to the teachers.

Hedgepath, a former public-school teacher who is a member of the Kentucky Education Professional Standards Board, said the Excellence in Teaching (EIT) Ceremony is one of her favorite events Campbellsville University does, and, "We appreciate you so much."

Allen, a former English teacher, said her mentors in teaching weren't afraid and were risk takers and motivators. "I know you are leaders of teachers and are excellent in teaching. Thank you for the privilege of honoring you."

Dr. John Chowning, who serves as executive assistant to the president of Campbellsville University (Dr. Michael V. Carter)

for government, community and constituent relations, talked about the history of the EIT program and said Campbellsville University, under the leadership of former president W.R. Davenport, stepped forward and joined with others in that period in showing support for public education and teachers by launching EIT in the Fifth Congressional District where Forward in the Fifth operated and then later expanded statewide.

"This is a small way in which we can honor you who are very dedicated school teachers," Chowning said. "This is your day. We celebrate you. Thank you for all you are doing," he said.

Chowning announced the names of the teachers receiving awards.

Katherine Bonds, soloist, sang "Getting to Know You" from "The King and I" and "Legacy." She was accompanied by her husband, Corey Bonds, assistant director of bands at Campbellsville University and instructor in music.

The Excellence in Teaching Awards program is in partnership with Lexington's CBS-affiliate, WKYT-TV.

The Excellence in Teaching Award recipients include the following with their superintendent listed first:

Green County Schools - William L.

Hodges, superintendent; Michelle Bagby Keltner, Green County Primary School; Amanda Lynn Snyder, Green County Middle School; Cortney Neal Mooney, Green County High School.

Keltner, of Summersville, has taught first and second grade Reading Intervention at Green County Primary School since 1998. She also taught second and third grade at Maryland City Elementary from 1995 to 1998.

Keltner graduated from Gosnell High School in 1987 before going on to obtain her Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education from Bowie State University in 1995.

She then received her Master of Arts degree in Learning and Behavior Disorders from Western Kentucky University in 2003.

She is married to Trent Keltner, and they have two children, Joshua Keltner and Abigail Keltner.

Snyder, of Greensburg, has taught sixth to eighth grade Exceptional Education at Green County Middle School since July 2015. She also taught ninth to twelfth grade Exceptional Education from July 2005 to December 2012 and was the Teacher of Visually Impaired from January 2013 to July 2015 at Green County High School.

She received her Bachelor of Science degree in Exceptional Education from Western Kentucky University in 2005.

She then went on to obtain Master of Arts in Education degree in School Counseling in 2009 and her Master of Arts degree in Special Education, Concentration in Low/Vision Blindness in 2014 from Western Kentucky University.

She is married to James Snyder, and they have two children, Gracie Slinker and Logan Slinker.

Mooney, of Columbia, has taught eleventh and twelfth grade Advanced Placement English at Green County High School since 2006. She also taught History and English at Adair County High School from 1998 to 2006.

Mooney graduated from Adair County High School in 1993 before going on to obtain her Bachelor of Arts degree in English and History from Campbellsville University in 1997.

She then received her Master of Arts degree in Curriculum Instruction from Campbellsville University in 2000.

She is the daughter of James McGowan and Marilyn McGowan and is married to Charles Mooney. They have four children, Colby Cowan, Katelyn Cowan, Case Cowan, and Clay Mooney.

BACK-TO-SCHOOL GUIDE

**First day for students
in the Green County School System is Aug. 7.
Opening day for faculty/staff is Aug. 6.**

*All times are CT

GCPS Back-to-School Fest:

Green County Primary School Fest will be held Tuesday, July 30 from 5 to 7 p.m. Kindergarten begins at 5 p.m. First and second grades begin at 6 p.m. Advance registration will be held July 22-23 from 12 to 6 p.m. each day and is a come and go event to pre-register (mostly online). For additional information call the Green County Family Resource Center at 270-932-6609

GCIS Back-to-School Fest:

The Green County Intermediate School Back-to-School Fest for third through fifth grade will be held Monday, July 29. The festival will begin at 4:30 p.m. for third grade students. Fourth and fifth grade will begin at 5:30 p.m. Advance registration will be held July 22-23 from 12 to 6 p.m. each day and is a come and go event to pre-register (mostly online). For additional information call the Green County Family Resource Center at 270-932-6609.

GCMS Back-to-School Event:

The Green County Middle School Back-to-School Fest will be held Monday, Aug. 5 from 5 to 7 p.m., 7th and 8th grade arrive between 5 - 6 p.m. and 6th grade at 6 p.m. (6th grade Orientation will follow). For additional information call GCMS at 270-932-7773.

GCHS Back-to-School Event:

Green County High School will have a back-to-school event Aug. 1. Freshmen should attend at 5 p.m. and Upperclassmen should attend at 6 p.m. For additional information call GCHS at 270-932-7481.