

Area Gatton Academy seniors named national merit finalists

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Patrick O'Boyle

LAUREL PHILPOTT

Two area residents were among 20 seniors from The Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science in Kentucky who have been recognized as finalists in the 2020 National Merit Scholarship Competition.

Since The Gatton Academy's inception in 2007, 156 students have been named national merit semifinalists. Eighty-eight current Gatton Academy seniors took the PSAT, meaning 22.72 percent of students earned national merit finalist level.

The 2019-20 area National Merit Finalists from The Gatton Academy are:

n Patrick O'Boyle, John Hardin High School, of Elizabethtown.

n Laurel Philpott, Nelson County High School, of Bardstown.

To become a finalist, a semifinalist and their school must submit a detailed scholarship application, which provides information about the semifinalist's academic record, participation in school and community activities, demonstrated leadership abilities, employment and honors and awards received. A semifinalist must have an outstanding academic record throughout their high school career, be endorsed and recommended by a high school official, write an essay, and earn SAT or ACT scores that confirm the student's earlier performance on the qualifying test. From the approximately 16,000 semifinalists, about 15,000 advanced to the finalist level.

More than 1.5 million juniors entered the 2020 National Merit Scholarship Program by taking the 2018 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test, which served as the initial screen of program entrants. From this list comes the nationwide pool of Semifinalists, representing less than one percent of U.S. high school seniors, and includes the highest scoring entrants in each state. The number of Semifinalists in a state is proportional to the state's percentage of the national total of graduating seniors

Since students take the qualifying PSAT exam in October of their junior year of high school, much of their preparation stems from learning opportunities during their freshman and sophomore years of high school. The Gatton Academy builds on those experiences to provide students with a robust application and preparation for the SAT, a critical component in becoming a finalist.

For information about The Gatton Academy, go to wku.edu/academy or call 270-745-6565.