

ParentInfo

News for a child's most important educator

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Ron A. Skillern named 2017 Kentucky Teacher of the Year



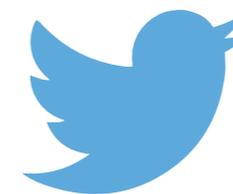
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Twitter chat

Parents: Want to chat with educators? A parent/teacher Twitter chat takes place at 9 p.m. every Wednesday. To participate or just follow the conversation, use the hashtag #PTchat.

All photos by KDE unless otherwise noted

Ron A. Skillern named 2017 Kentucky Teacher of the Year

FRANKFORT – A 30-year veteran teacher at Bowling Green High School, Ron A. Skillern, has been named the 2017 Kentucky Teacher of the Year.

Valvoline, Inc.™ and the Kentucky Department of Education made the announcement at an Oct. 19 ceremony at the Capitol Rotunda. Gov. Matt Bevin; Education and Workforce Development Cabinet Deputy Secretary Brad Montell; Commissioner of Education Stephen L. Pruitt; and Sam Mitchell, chief executive officer of Valvoline, were on hand to make the presentation.

Kellie Jones, a 4th-grade science teacher at Taylor County Elementary, was named the 2017 Elementary School Teacher of the Year. Sarah Mills, a 7th-grade science teacher at Eastside Middle School in Bullitt County, was named the 2017 Middle School Teacher of the Year.

The three joined 21 other teachers from across the state honored with 2017 Valvoline Inc. Teacher Achievement Awards.

“Teachers are our most important asset and these teachers represent the best in the state,” said Kentucky Commissioner of Education Stephen L. Pruitt. “Teachers are the ones who stand between I can and I can’t, between knowledge and ignorance and between impossible and possible. Each day in the classroom, Kentucky’s

teachers prove that students can reach the high levels of achievement that will prepare them for success in college, careers and life.”

In a statement, Education Secretary Hal Heiner said, “the 24 teachers recognized this year truly epitomize the finest educators in Kentucky because they were nominated by their peers, students, parents and administrators, and they go through a rigorous process to be named to this elite group of professionals.”

“Teachers not only impact the classroom, they influence every workplace in our state,” Heiner said. “Thank you to all our teachers who dedicate themselves each day to challenging their students and helping them reach their full potential.”

Jones and Mills received \$3,000 each and a customized, art-glass vase from Valvoline Inc., while Skillern received \$10,000 and a commemorative crystal-glass bowl. In addition, the Kentucky Department of Education will provide a sabbatical or suitable alternative for Skillern, who also will represent the state in the 2017 National Teacher of the Year competition. The remaining 21 winners each received \$500 cash awards. All 24 teachers received framed certificates and were recognized at a luncheon following the ceremony.

“I’m pleased to honor and

recognize the 24 Valvoline Teacher Achievement Award winners and the Kentucky Teachers of the Year. Teachers play a critical role in helping to both shape and inspire a child’s desire for learning,” said Sam Mitchell, chief executive officer of Valvoline, Inc.

Valvoline and the Kentucky Department of Education co-sponsor the Kentucky Teacher Achievement Awards. Applications for the program were distributed across the state. The first tier of the selection process was completed in August, with 24 teachers selected as 2017 Valvoline Inc. Teacher Achievement Award winners.

Nine top scorers – each from the elementary, middle and high school levels – were selected, and teams of educators visited their classrooms to view them at work and to conduct personal interviews. From those nine, three were selected as 2017 Kentucky Teachers of the Year. The selection of the overall Kentucky Teacher of the Year was based on the



Teacher of the Year award winners pose with Commissioner Stephen Pruitt after the award ceremony at the Kentucky State Capitol in Frankfort. From left are, 2017 Kentucky Teacher of the Year Ron Skillern of Bowling Green High School, Kentucky Middle School Teacher of the Year Sarah Mills of Eastside Middle School, and Kentucky Elementary Teacher of the Year Kellie Jones of Taylor County Elementary School.

Photo by Bobby Ellis, Oct. 19, 2016

compilation of scores from all phases of the judging.

The Kentucky Teacher Awards program combines the best elements of what was formerly known as the Ashland Teacher Achievement Awards. Valvoline separated from Ashland to become a publicly traded company headquartered in Lexington, and is now sponsoring the Teacher Achievement Awards and the Kentucky Teacher of the Year programs. This marks the 16th year the Kentucky Department of Education and Ashland/Valvoline have partnered to honor Kentucky educators. Since 1988, approximately \$776,500 has been awarded to 524 teachers in grades K to 12.

For a feature story about the winners click [here](#).

Valvoline Inc. Teacher Achievement Award Winners

Elementary

- Carren M. Cook, Kenwood Elementary School, Jefferson County
- Kim Delaney, Longbranch Elementary School, Boone County
- Donna Cheryl Howard, Whitesville Elementary School, Daviess County
- Kellie Jones, Taylor County Elementary School, Taylor County
- Stephanie Williams Laird, Heath Elementary School, McCracken County
- Jennifer C. O'Daniel, Olive Hill Elementary School, Carter County
- Elizabeth Ramey, Elkhorn City Elementary School, Pike County
- Byron Wilson, Kentucky School for the Deaf (elementary school)

Middle School

- Cayeann Cowan, Robertson County School, Robertson County
- Jennifer R. Farley, Farristown Middle School, Madison County
- Alexandra Howard, Barrett Traditional Middle School, Jefferson County
- Sarah Mills, Eastside Middle School, Bullitt County
- Candida Murphy, Robert D. Campbell Jr. High School, Clark County

- Chasity Shipley, Barren County Middle School, Barren County
- Brandi F. Smith, Madison Middle School, Madison County
- Emmanuel A. Stone, Shelby County West Middle School, Shelby County

High School

- Tammy Chapman, McCracken County High School, McCracken County
- Cathy Conley, Knott County Central High School, Knott County
- Cheryl Dicken, Campbellville High School, Campbellville Independent
- Kip Hottman, Fern Creek High School, Jefferson County
- Ashley Onkst, East Jessamine High School, Jessamine County
- Amanda Ratliff, Johnson Central High School, Johnson County
- Tricia Shelton, Boone County High School, Boone County
- Ron A. Skillern, Bowling Green High School, Bowling Green Independent

For biographies of all the winners, click [here](#).



Valvoline Teacher Achievement Award winners with Commissioner Stephen Pruitt after the award ceremony at the Kentucky State Capitol in Frankfort. Photo by Bobby Ellis, Oct. 19, 2016

Secretary of State Essay and Slogan Contest



The Office of the Secretary of State's 2016-17 Essay and Slogan Contest is accepting student entries. The contest helps students get engaged in the democratic process and demonstrate a commitment to active citizenship.

The slogan contest is open to students in grades 6-8; the essay contest is for students in grades 9-12. Cash prizes will be awarded to students in both divisions, including \$1,000 awards for the first-place slogan and for the winning essay at each high school grade level. For the first time, a desktop computer will be awarded to the school with the highest participation rate.

The entry deadline is Dec. 16. Click [here](#) for more information and entry forms. For questions, please contact Bradford Queen with the Secretary of State's Office via e-mail at Bradford.Queen@ky.gov or by phone at (502) 782-7407.

Secretary of State Allison Lundergan Grimes with the winners of the 2014 essay contest. Photo provided.

Award honors female students interested in computing, technology



The National Center for Women and Information Technology (NCWIT) is accepting applications for its Award for Aspirations in Computing, which honors young women who are active and interested in computing and technology.

The competition is open to girls in grades 9-12. Recipients are selected for their outstanding aptitude and interest in computing, proven leadership ability, academic

performance and plans for post-secondary education.

Affiliate award winners receive scholarship and internship opportunities, as well as getting access to a peer network of technical young women in the NCWIT Aspirations in Computing Community. National award winners receive various prizes, cash and a trip to the Bank of America headquarters in Charlotte, N.C., March 3-5 for a celebration and networking with Bank of America employees.

The application deadline is Nov. 7. Click [here](#) for more information.



Nominations open for gifted education awards



The Kentucky Association for Gifted Education is accepting nominations for its awards programs. The Distinguished Student Award recognizes a student from grades 3-6 who has distinguished achievement in academics, leadership or the arts and has made a contribution to the community at a level beyond what is expected of a child in the student's age group.

The Michael Caudill Educator Award recognizes an administrator, counselor, teacher or other education professional who has made significant contributions to gifted education and who has a record of advocacy for gifted and talented children and youth.

The Service and Advocacy Awards recognizes anyone, including educators, who has made significant contributions to gifted education and who has a record of advocacy for gifted and talented children and youth.

The nomination deadline is Dec. 1. Click [here](#) for more and links to nomination forms. KAGE will announce the award recipients during its annual conference Feb. 27-28 in Lexington.

10 Myths about the FAFSA and applying for financial aid



Photo provided

There's so much information available about financial aid for college that it can be hard to tell the facts from fiction. The U.S. Department of Education has put together a list of common myths about financial aid and the [Free Application for Federal Student](#)

[Aid](#) (FAFSA).

MYTH 1: We make too much money, so my child won't qualify for any aid.

FACT: There's no income cut-off to qualify for federal student aid. It doesn't matter if you have a low or high income, you will still qualify for some type of financial aid, including low-interest student

loans. Many factors besides income – such as family size and year in school – are taken into account. Eligibility is determined by a [mathematical formula](#), not by the parents' income alone.

MYTH 2: We have to wait to file taxes before I can fill out the FAFSA.

FACT: No need to wait. You can complete the 2017-18 FAFSA now using 2015 income and tax information. It doesn't matter if your 2016 taxes haven't been filed because the 2017-18 FAFSA doesn't need that information. You won't have to update your FAFSA after filing 2016 taxes either, because 2015 information is what's required.

MYTH 3: Students who support themselves don't have to include their parent's information on the FAFSA.

FACT: This is not necessarily true. Even if a student lives on his or her own or files his or her own taxes, they may still be considered

a dependent student for FAFSA purposes. The FAFSA asks a [series of questions](#) to determine dependency status. If the student is independent, he or she won't need to include their parents' information on their FAFSA. But if a student is dependent, he or she must provide their parents' information.

MYTH 4: Students should wait until they are accepted to a college before filling out the FAFSA.

FACT: Why wait? Start now. As a matter of fact, students can start as early as their senior year of high school. At least one college must be listed to receive your information. List all schools being considered, even if the student hasn't applied or been accepted yet. The schools listed will use the FAFSA information to determine the types and amounts of aid. To add another school after the application has been submitted, login at [fafsa.gov](#) and submit a

correction. Submit a FAFSA as early as possible after Oct. 1 because some states and schools have limited funds.

MYTH 5: If a student didn't receive enough money for school, he or she is just out of luck.

FACT: There are still options. If a student has received federal, state and college aid but still has a gap between what the financial aid covers and the school requires, [check out these 7 options](#).

MYTH 6: We should call "the FAFSA people" (Federal Student Aid) to find out how much financial aid money my child is getting and when.

FACT: No, you'll have to contact the school. Federal Student Aid does not award or disburse aid, so we won't be able to tell you what your student will get. You will have to contact the financial aid office at the school to find out the status of the aid. Just keep in mind that each school has a [different timeline](#) for awarding financial aid.

MYTH 7: There's only one FAFSA deadline and that's not until June.

FACT: There are three main deadlines to check: your state, school and federal deadline. State and federal deadlines can be found [on this page](#). Check the school's website for its FAFSA deadline. Also, if your child is applying for any scholarships that require the FAFSA, they might have a different deadline as well. Even if your deadlines aren't for a while, we recommend students fill out the FAFSA ASAP to make sure they don't miss out on any aid.

MYTH 8: Students can share an FSA ID with their parent(s).

FACT: Nope. For dependent students, two people will need their own [FSA ID](#) to sign the FAFSA online:

1. The student
2. One parent

An FSA ID is a username and password that students must use to log in to certain U.S. Department of Education (ED) websites. The FSA ID identifies someone who has the right to access their own personal information on ED websites such as the FAFSA.

If you are a parent of a [dependent student](#), you will need your own FSA ID if you want to sign your child's FAFSA electronically. If you have more than one child attending college, you can use the same FSA ID to sign all applications. You'll need your own e-mail address for each FSA ID.

Your FSA ID is used to sign legally binding documents electronically. It has the same legal status as a written signature. Don't give your FSA ID to anyone – not even to someone helping you fill out the FAFSA. Sharing your FSA ID could put you at risk of [identity theft](#).

MYTH 9: Only students with good grades get financial aid.

FACT: While a high grade point average will help students get into a good school and may help with academic scholarships, most federal student aid programs do not take grades into consideration when students first apply. Keep in mind that if students want to continue receiving aid throughout their college career, they will have to maintain [satisfactory academic progress](#) as determined by the school.

MYTH 10: It costs money to submit the FAFSA.

FACT: You NEVER have to pay to complete the FAFSA when you go to [fafsa.gov](#). If you're paying a fee, you're not on the official government website.

For more information and FAFSA tips, go to the U.S. Department of Education's [blog](#).

